

LANGUAGE IN A DEPENDENT SOCIETY : BELIZE,  
CENTRAL AMERICA

Elizabeth Welsh

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at the  
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Language in a Dependent Society: Belize, Central America.

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## ABSTRACT

In Belize the medium of instruction in schools is English, despite the fact that the pupils do not speak English as their first language. Some Spanish-speakers would like to see Spanish used as a medium of instruction in schools too. Other Spanish-speakers think this would lessen their chances in national and international socioeconomic and political circumstances where English is the dominant language. The evaluation of language use in schools is just one aspect of a multitude of attitudes Belizeans have about language in their lives. These language attitudes are an expression of Belizean responses to the socioeconomic dynamic in Belizean society. Their attitudes are determined by sociocultural, socioeconomic and political allegiances. There is some conflict between those whose stake is in the status quo in Belize, whereby it is economically dependent on its historic links with the United States, the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom and the European Economic Community, and those Spanish speakers, who have prospered from the production of sugar-cane and come to vie with the Creoles for socioeconomic predominance, who feel that their interests would be better served by developing economic and cultural links with Latin American countries. This more or less overt tension in Belizean society means that there is no recognition of an emergent Belizean identity which brings together Creole and Hispanic cultural manifestations and has Belizean Creole as its linguistic expression. The strengths of the languages involved lie in the



economic base and potential of the respective speakers. Whatever the outcome of these forces Belizeans would benefit from positively acknowledging the linguistic diversity in their nation and fostering their achievements in two or more languages, as this linguistic flexibility could be one of their main resources in responding to the developments in their geopolitical and economic situation.

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Finally my thanks to the very many people whom I met in Belize as they were all welcoming, generous and helpful. I hope this study can be of help to someone in Belize.

## Preface

'The mahogany forests have all been cut down. Bush remains, and scattered little bush communities: Maya Indians, who move among the mighty ruins of their civilisation like any other degraded immigrant group; Black Caribs, transported from the West Indian island of St Vincent, considered by Negroes to be very black - very ugly, with a bad smell; Spanish and mestizo refugees from Yucatán; and, in the last 10 years, some thousands of Mennonites, a Bible-reading German-American sect, who have transformed many square miles of tropical bush, bought at 15 shillings an acre, into the landscape of pioneer America. The descendants of the Negro woodcutters, now two-thirds of the population, and confirmed lovers of city life, live in the overcrowded coastal capital, Belize City.'

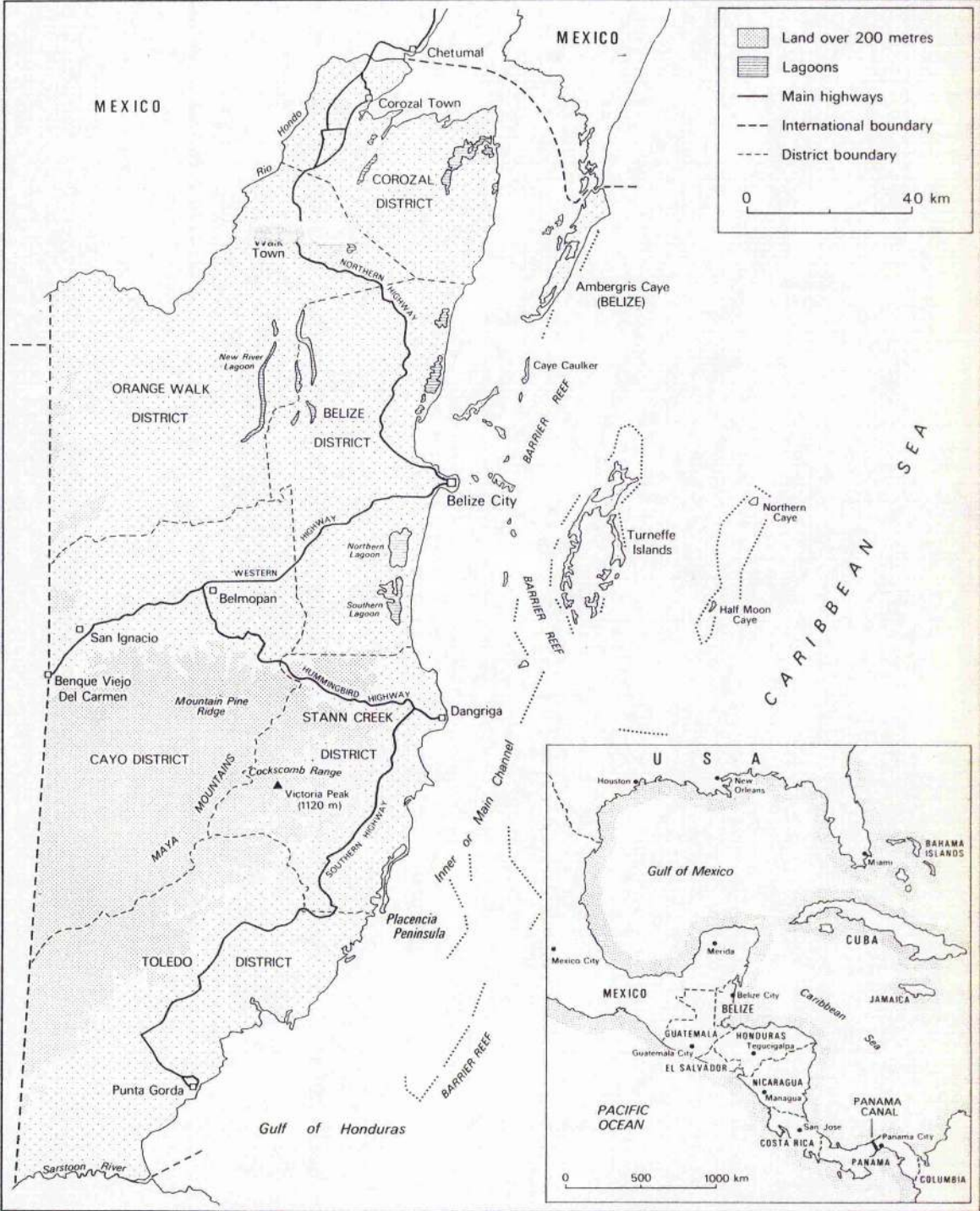
I quote V.S. Naipaul (1) as his description of Belize parallels those to be found in many history books and touristic accounts. I hope that in the following pages I will be able to show how an incipient Belizean national identity is forming and that Belize is not a backwater of displaced populations living in a timeless limbo.

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# Belize



## Introduction

### Language Needs: The Wider Context

Before any consideration is given to the linguistic environment Belizeans operate in, language planning as a field of the sociology of language requires a few words in order to outline and clarify its relevance. Language planning in Belize is minimal as elsewhere. English is the official language and the language of instruction in schools, although very few of the children will speak standard West Indian English as their first language. Spanish is taught as a subject in secondary schools. Many children speak Spanish as their first language and the others mostly speak Creole, or Garífuna and some speak one of various Mayan languages. Radio Belize has a jingle which promotes the idea of Belize as the bridge between the Caribbean and Central America. Indeed, Belizeans can see themselves at a cultural and linguistic crossroads in the region and in 1984 there were plans to build a Regional Language Training Institute where students from Mexico and Central America would go to learn English and others, from North America and the Caribbean, would go to acquire Spanish (1).

This study is an attempt to evaluate the language situation in Belize and the language needs of its population. No mere linguistic solution is proposed here with a view to providing for these language needs, as they are symptomatic of the dynamic of the social structure. The catalysts of change in Belize are



given full consideration in this study as we look at the Belizeans' historical inheritance and the implications of their position in the Caribbean basin and Central America, which, along with the Middle East and South East Asia, is one of the most politically explosive regions in the world.

Developed, developing and developed societies all have language conflicts in their midst. History has usually amalgamated speakers of different languages into one political unit and these states have found that language barriers contribute to fragmentation and division among their population. Take Spain or India, where, as in Belize, language, amongst other things, is inextricably tied up with the construction of a national identity. Different linguistic communities vie to have their language recognised in an official and institutional capacity.

Heterogenous linguistic conditions are at once the cause and effect of much wider social divisions and conflict. Urbanisation, industrialisation and now the new technology bring rapid social change and create people's new language needs. One might assume that these needs are identified and satisfied and that linguists would be at the forefront of this work. However the product of that field of linguistics known as the sociology of language bears no witness to it. The closest field of study to one aiming at an assessment and evaluation of language needs and their solution would be according to the relatively recent conventions of the sociology of language, 'language planning'. In the relevant tomes we are referred to various case studies.

Haugan (2) looks at the rivalry between Nynorsk and Bokmål in Norway since independence from Denmark and at the possibility of a compromise solution in the ultimate fusion of the two languages as they are quite similar. We are also informed, for example, of the revival of Hebrew since the creation of Israel (3) and of the promotion of Swahili as the national language in Tanzania (4). Rubin has been one of a group of sociologists to study the position of Guaraní in Paraguay (5,6 & 7). So we come to consider language planning processes such as the selection of an official, and perhaps a national language too, by a particular nation for whatever political or pragmatic reasons and, then, that language's standardization and normalization.

But one might suppose we were growing cultures of language policies on agar in a laboratory environment because despite the attempt at a sociological approach the all important social and political motives behind any particular language planning policy are not presented in their totality nor fully discussed. Questions of the relative power of the languages which are in competition are referred to obliquely in terms of status and prestige. Nationalist sentiment, a group's self-assertion against outside interference and resistance to domination, might well be stated but never investigated to the full extent in order to throw light on the real reasons behind the choice to defend and/or develop a language. Indeed the very linguists who set out to standardize and normalize a language too often fail dismally in their venture, leaving hollow dictionaries and grammars, which bear little relation to the language as it is spoken and the



patterns of language development the speakers have adapted spontaneously. This is very much the case in Paraguay where Jopará, the form of Guaraní spoken by the mass of the population and which has borrowed extensively from Spanish, is ignored by purist academics, who promote a form of Guaraní free from Spanish borrowings. This choice fails to recognise the legitimate historical development of Jopará. Jopará is a form of Guaraní which satisfies the needs of a modern and urban society and it is already widely spoken.

Social reality must be taken into account. Of course, language planning is on the whole an academic field of study as there are only rare opportunities to devise and apply policies. Language planning tends to be either of purist design, as in France with the work of the 'Académie Française', or it is a negative process whereby minority languages 'die out' because nothing is done to positively and effectively support them. We can see this in the context of our own society which in British inner cities is now definitively multiracial and multicultural and remains as class-ridden as ever. It is only now that some action is being taken with regard to the underachievement and failure of certain sectors of our population at school - as witnessed by the Swann report and by the simple observation that the Inner London Education Authority is employing more English as a Second Language and some mother-tongue teachers. It was Shirley Williams who set up the inquiry into the education of ethnic minority children in 1979 under the chairmanship of Lord Swann. The committee of inquiry found that

Afro-Caribbeans underachieve because of racism and economic and social deprivation. Asian children were found to underachieve less dramatically. The report which came out in March 1985 opposes the introduction of a 'multi-cultural' education that would isolate the ethnic minorities. Bilingual education involving a commitment to mother-tongue teaching is rejected in favour of providing for the teaching of English as a Second Language (8). Clearly we are still in the throes of the era of compensatory education which followed on Bernstein's revelations about working class children not disposing of the middle-class 'elaborated code' in their linguistic repertoire. It was assumed that working class 'cultural deprivation' could be eliminated by supplying 'compensatory education'. The Swann committee is falling into the same trap if it believes ESL and a pluralist curriculum is going to solve the problems of the special denial of opportunities faced by ethnic minorities. Numerous young people who do not face racist barriers are nevertheless marginalised from success at school and on the job market. All children, whatever their ethnic origins, are judged according to middle-class values and expectations. Middle-class children obviously get a head start. Children who naturally express themselves in a local dialect, which usually amounts to a sociolect, or who speak first and foremost a 'foreign' language, are expected to adopt and emulate somebody else's linguistic behaviour. If there is real concern about the alienation of these young people, the bull should be taken by the horns. Rather than suppress cultural and linguistic diversity with assimilationist tactics it should be embraced and put to positive

constructive use. Seventy per cent of the world's population is bilingual and we should stop regarding bilingualism as harmful. Those children in school in Britain whose first language is not English would learn English better if they were allowed to develop their own language to the full. Modern language teaching in British schools bears little relation to our commercial needs. The encouragement of Arabic, Italian, Greek and Chinese, to mention but a few of the languages spoken by children in our schools, would be to the nation's economic advantage (9). Anti-racist policies will not bring equality to an unequal society but institutional support for beleaguered ethnic minorities will go some way in redressing the linguistic and cultural balance of our cities and help a redistribution of political power.

In the United States of America the growth of the Hispanic population has led to equally half-hearted and short-sighted responses. The Hispanic population will outnumber the rest of the U.S. population by the year 2000. Not all are illegal immigrants. The majority are citizens and pay taxes but on 2 February 1981 President Reagan put an end to the compulsory provision of bilingual education in those school districts which had more than twenty-five children who did not speak English as their mother-tongue. This provision had only been enforced in August 1974 under the Bilingual Education Act. The Reagan administration claimed it cost too much and President Reagan has also said that all U.S. citizens should speak English and not seek to maintain or promote other languages (10). Linguistic and cultural heterogeneity per se are not causes of conflict.

Inequality in economic, social and political dimensions has repercussions on linguistic and cultural identities. Inequalities in Belize are not as marked as in Great Britain or the United States and English, Creole and Spanish are all strong contenders for a dominant position in the country. At the moment the language situation is dynamic and unresolved.

It appears language conflict gives rise to two behavioural tendencies. Oppressed groups who wish to escape their identity as such might do so by learning another language - many indigenous languages in Latin America are dying out for this reason. Members of Indian groups might deny their ancestry and deny any knowledge of their first tongue claiming to speak only Spanish in the hope of avoiding the prejudice which has kept them marginalised and oppressed for so long. This occurs in Belize with the Yucatec Mayan Indians who tend to deny their stigmatised heritage and present themselves as Spanish-speaking mestizos. On the other hand cultural penetration might provoke a community to a nationalist reaction - however such a reaction tends to occur only in those groups who have an economic power base and so some social and political sway, as opposed to totally oppressed peoples who have no hope of organising resistance to cultural pressure. Compare the fortunes of the Basques and Catalans in Spain as opposed to the Nahua and the Quechua in Latin America. In Belize the urban Creole and Spanish speakers hold greater sway than the poorer rural Garífuna or Maya speakers and the precedence given to the languages spoken by the former reflects this.

It is unrealistic to consider linguistic and cultural plurality as wasteful, inefficient and redundant duplication. Monopoly capitalism did not bring cultural and linguistic uniformity to Western European states as predicted by Lenin and Stalin. Language planning is a tool available to authoritarian and democratic societies. For some, planning and democracy are incompatible. Such people, typified by the exponents of free enterprise and laissez-faire, oppose any form of planning as an incursion on the rights of the individual. These persons are in fact defending an individual's unabated right to oppress and exploit others. Planning can be used within a democratic framework to correct the manipulation which has allowed and enjoyed the existence of a silent majority, or rather silenced majority.

All the above is simply to explain the context - political, socio-economic and educational - in which an assessment and evaluation of the language situation in Belize and of the direction of future shifts should be made. In a world where economic advance is modelled according to the values and priorities of the military powers who 'have the technology', all other nations are forced to follow the leaders. No economic or military aid, nor even emergency aid, is given free. The conditions attached will stipulate commercial and political cooperation with the donating power. Such dependence conditions the future of undeveloped countries like Belize. Belizean national identity is only in the process of formation. At present it is fragmented into various cultural and linguistic

groupings. Ideally it would appear that nurturing a national identity along with the plurality that exists would be the perfect adaptation Belize could make to its geopolitical location. Different sectors of its population relate to North America and the Caribbean, others to Mexico and Central America. The appreciation of this plurality could be instituted and developed in Belizean schools. But the effects of such an education would not be lasting unless it had its corollary in the community outside school. If Belize places itself firmly in the Central American camp or decides to relate to those Caribbean countries wary of U.S. imperialism, or on the contrary, opens its doors to U.S. penetration, it will be determining its future cultural and linguistic make-up. There will be no incentive to promote cultural and linguistic behaviour outside the mainstream of that of its chosen alignment. If the Belizean government does not make an explicit choice with a majority backing the different ethnic groups who are already making their choices and forming their alliances will continue to tussle amongst themselves.

To conclude, we can only understand language behaviour if we study the economic, political and social conditions which determine a group's cultural response. Every entity can only be explained in terms of its history and Belize is no exception. I commenced my research with the idea that language attitudes are a neglected field of the sociology of language because the opinions of the people themselves are infinitely more important than the assessment of any language planning specialist. But the methodology we employ for eliciting language attitudes is the



interview and the degree of introspection achieved is disappointing (11). Language attitudes are purely symptomatic of the socioeconomic structure and people reproduce the dominant ideology when questioned about them. Even where language attitudes of loyalty to and nationalistic promotion of a language are apparently dynamic elements in a group's assertion of itself, the real catalysts will be socioeconomic. In Belize various Spanish-speaking members of the community were initiating moves in 1984 to develop an incipient Latin nationalism but these activities were not a surprising concomitant of the mestizos' political ambitions, which had arisen from their recent prosperity and economic gains over the Creoles, who had always been the most powerful group in colonial times. I do not propose language solutions as actual language planning lies outside my powers - I simply wish to present the language picture in Belize today and consider patterns and trends and point out people's consequent language needs.

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## Chapter 1

### Belizean Independence

1.0 Belize acceded to independence on 21st September, 1981. There had been full internal self-government in Belize since 1964. Belize has inherited the governmental, legal and political system of Great Britain. Independence was retarded by the Guatemalan claim to the country. This claim still has not been settled and 1700 British troops remain in Belize because of the threat to Belizean sovereignty. The British would pull out if it were not for U.S. pressure - Belize is of great strategic importance in a politically explosive region like Central America.

#### 1.1. The military presence in Belize.

On 2 October, 1983, 'The Observer' reported that Mrs Thatcher had told President Reagan that Britain would be withdrawing from Belize as the armed forces were overstretched after the Falklands War. A conservative estimate of the annual cost of keeping troops in Belize was £33 million. Also it was stated that Britain did not want any physical involvement in Central American politics and was not prepared to back U.S. policy in Central America with troops on the ground.

U.S. pressure soon changed this stand, but Britain still refuses to guarantee staying in Belize until a settlement is reached. Trevor Petch (1) summed up the situation in May, 1985:

‘Fearful itself of being drawn into the regional conflict, the U.D.P. regime indicated that in the event of a premature British departure, it would prefer a U.S. security guarantee to U.S. troops. Diplomatically, this is sure to result in the maintenance of pressure from the Reagan administration on the Thatcher government to prevent its becoming a conduit to the revolutionary forces in Guatemala’s northern Petén province’.

On independence Britain agreed to keep troops in Belize for ‘an appropriate period’. The intention was to keep the presence purely temporary and all planning was done on a six-month basis. However on 3 March, 1985, ‘The Observer’ reported that British troops will stay for at least 2 years. In fact many make-shift temporary military installations are now being made permanent. Apparently the Americans are shouldering some of the cost.

With a view to Belize’s independence, the Belizean Defence Force was formed in 1977. There are 700 members. Recruitment is a problem in such a small population and the Belizean economy cannot support it. So it is financed to a large extent by Great Britain, the U.S. and Canada.

#### 1.2. The Guatemalan claim.

Guatemala has been making a claim over Belizean sovereignty since it acceded to independence itself over 160 years ago. It

has always felt that its access to the Atlantic and so the economic development of the remote north-east corner of its territory - the Petén - has been impeded by the existence of Belize.

Before the independence of Belize it was expected that in March 1981 the London Accord would be signed by the concerned parties. According to this Guatemala would have had access to Puerto Barrios through Belize. However the Guatemalans never ratified the Accord because they were not given the right to build military installations in the 2 cays concerned. Whilst General Efraín Ríos Montt was in power in Guatemala (March 1982 - August 1983) Guatemala demanded the southern third of Belize in return for recognising Belize's independence. Now Guatemala is only asking for Ranguana and Sapodilla Cays which is regarded as too much, but their desire for access into the Caribbean is understood.

### 1.3 U.S. interest in the Guatemalan claim.

The U.S.'s main concern in Central America is to incapacitate left-wing forces. Tony Thorndike (2) describes U.S. interests in 1967:

'It was agreed that U.S. judge Bethuel Webster would act as 'honest broker' and recommend terms of settlement. His report, presented in the form of a draft Anglo-Guatemalan Treaty, allowed for Belizean independence, but in such circumscribed terms that it was virtually meaningless. For instance, both police and army

would be subject to Guatemalan control, and at no point in the draft treaty was the Guatemalan claim revoked. Furthermore, all communications with external bodies and other states would have to be sent via the Guatemalan Foreign Ministry. The incorporation of Belize into Guatemala in all but name would be complete. The U.S. government supported the proposals, a strong factor again being the strategic one; the treaty would prevent the allegedly pro-Cuban and 'communist' rebels in north-east Guatemala using a militarily weak Belize as a place of sanctuary.

The U.S. also has substantial economic investments in Guatemala. The American government's concern with its 'back yard' means that it was not keen on Belize developing links with regimes like Manley's in Jamaica, or Bishop's in Grenada, and currently neither with the Cuban nor the Nicaraguan regimes. Indeed the U.S. was not pleased with the 1979 general elections in Belize which brought the P.U.P. back into power precisely because they had fraternised with these regimes and the U.S. backed the anti-communist stance of Dean Lindo, then opposition leader.

The U.S. is determined that British troops shall remain in Belize as they act as a stabilising influence. The U.S. and Guatemala do not want Belize to serve as a base for guerilla operations nor do they want it to turn into a Cuban bridgehead into Central America - they already allege arms go to El Salvador through Belize from Cuba. There has been a very interesting development recently. The August 1986 Belize Briefing (C.A.I.S.) reported that the Belize Times of 29 June 1986 had quoted a Voice of America radio interview with an unidentified Nicaraguan contra

leader, suggesting that contra arms pass through Belize.

In fact everyone welcomes the presence of the British troops - Americans, Guatemalans and Cubans alike. A report in 'The Guardian (3) revealed why:

'The Guatemalans, for their part, also want Britain to stay and sent a secret letter to London last year welcoming the stabilising influence the British forces had in border areas. Cuba also let it be known that it welcomes the British presence. Havana has noted that the British have discovered no evidence to support U.S. claims that Belize serves as a conduit for weapons for left-wing guerillas. Should the U.S. move in, the Cubans suspect it would not be long before they would be accused of supplying the Salvadorean and Guatemalan revolutionary left across Belize territory'.

As we can see Belize's independence, even its sovereignty, is not in the hands of Belizeans. The unstable political conditions in Central America and U.S. intervention in this region mean that the protection of Belizean national integrity may well be subordinated to the more callous political and economic interests of bigger powers.

These threats to Belizean independence arise in times of regional crisis. On a day to day basis it is the Belizean economy which compromises Belize's independence as it is manipulated by foreign interests.

1.4.0. Economic dependence.

We need to look at the Belizean economy and the relationships it creates with other nations and the linguistic pressures those relationships exert.

#### 1.4.1. A monoconomy.

Apart from the isolated self-contained indigenous economy of Maya agriculturalists, Belize's economy has been moulded by more powerful external interests - formerly Britain and these days rather the United States of America.

Since before the colony, which was officially proclaimed 200 years after the first British subjects were active in the region, the British involvement in Belize revolved around the sources of logwood and mahogany until after the Second World War. In 1983 timber only accounted for 2.1 % of Belize's export earnings however. After the war Belize put all its economic eggs in the sugar-cane basket and once again it is paying dearly for not diversifying as the sugar market has collapsed and Tate and Lyle have pulled out of Belize except for a very small operation in Libertad, near Orange Walk.

Until 1855 when the Panama canal opened Belize City was the entrepot for all British trade with Central America. Hence there were some thriving merchant houses in the colony. These merchants were primarily concerned with extracting forestry resources but they also depended on earning from imports and they have constituted the main obstacle to Belizean farming, and indeed manufacturing industry too, providing for the home market.



Not only these merchant family businesses but also later the metropolitan companies that bought them out and the colonial administration were not interested in Belize developing economically to cater for its people. These merchant houses controlled the local legislature until 1964. Belize was not a self-governing nation caring for its own, but a peripheral colonial outpost serving metropolitan interests. Their concern was to extract forestry resources and do business with minimum capital outlay, and not to develop the country through paying taxes to fund public spending. Even today Belizean shops are full of expensive imported items from food to domestic and industrial appliances. The role of local produce is almost non-existent as witnessed by local markets which can provide only a limited selection of fruit and vegetables and fish.

#### 1.4.2. Land ownership and land use.

So historically all the potentially productive land in Belize has been in the hands of the forestry-merchant group which has been unwilling to develop it for agricultural use, as it preferred to make money from imported foodstuffs rather than producing them in Belize and it required Belizean labour to work in the logging camps and not to farm products to compete with imports.

Agricultural development was also prevented by the fact no money had been spent on infrastructure. Until the 1930s all movement was along the rivers as this is how the timber was brought from the forests. The decline of forestry did not encourage the extractors to invest in reforestation or systematic cutting nor



to diversify by developing agriculture. They invested outside of Belize and also much land has fallen into the hands of speculators, who are mainly from the United States of America.

The school textbook - 'A History of Belize: Nation in the Making' (4) states that in 1981 80% of all privately owned land (about 1/2 of the national territory) was in the hands of U.S. nationals. These are invariably large estates. According to the same source in 1971 3 % of all the landowners in Belize owned 95% of the land and 91% of the landowners owned 1%. Belize's territory covers 5.6 million acres (it is approximately the size of Wales) and about 40% (2.2 million acres) is assessed to be suitable for agricultural development, although much of this land is not easily accessible. In 1981 10.7% of the land was under permanent cultivation and 11.7% in total was being cultivated (the difference is that the latter figure includes milpa farmers).

Ashcraft (5) estimated that of the 1,425,000 acres of land in Belize which is 'readily adaptable to farm use', most of it was in private hands.

The government has made some attempt to get this land into productive use, through various pieces of legislation. It made moves to increase the security of tenants in 1962. In 1947 it had made provisions to purchase land when established communities were found to be under threat. In 1966 the 'Rural Land Utilisation Tax' was introduced, whereby a penalty must be paid for all underdeveloped parcels of land over 100 acres in size.

Steps towards stopping speculation and bringing idle fertile land into use were intensified in 1973 when the 'Alien Landholding Ordinance' was passed. This regulates the right of foreigners to buy land. The foreigner must satisfy the government that he is going to develop it if a licence is to be issued.

In 1982 land taxes were revised to encourage owners to utilise land with agricultural potential.

The question of foreign land speculation in Belize has arisen again of late with the purchase of land by Coca Cola. Barry Bowen, Belize's most important business man (involved in reexports to Mexico, and whose family company produces Belize's own beer - Beliken - and is Coca Cola's Belize bottler), bought up 700,000 acres of the Belize Estate Produce Company in 1982 by raising a huge loan in Panama. Initially heralded as the biggest foreign investment in Belize since its independence in 1981 and the institution of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (6), Coca Cola has bought 196,000 acres of this land, but only plans to develop 30,000 acres for citrus production. It wishes to sell the remaining 160,000 odd acres. One wonders how a licence to purchase was given under the Alien Landholding Ordinance, as Coca Cola has not shown any intention to develop the vast part of the lands it has purchased. What Mr Barry Bowen and the other partners Messrs Howell and Mischer intend to do with their new property is also pure speculation at the moment. One of the U.D.P. electoral promises in 1984 was to bring more foreign investment to the country and the Barry Bowen/Coca Cola/ Howell

and Mischer deal has dominated the press since autumn 1985. However no equivalent discussion has been given to the need to provide the land and infrastructure to Belizean farmers and recently arrived refugee farmers to build up a small-scale but much more solid and secure home supply and market.

#### 1.4.3. The sugar industry.

Since 1959 both sugar and citrus exports have exceeded timber exports(5). It was the British colonial administration that provided assistance for the development of these industries as the Imperial Treasury had taken over the colony's finances and trade deficits in 1932 after a devastating hurricane and had decided to encourage economic diversification in an effort to make the colony more self-sufficient. Unfortunately Belize simply swapped its economic dependency from timber to sugar. In 1983 timber brought in 2.1% of export earnings and sugar brought in 53.9% (7). As well as half of Belize's export earnings, sugar represented a quarter of the Gross Domestic Product and of total employment in the country (8). More than 10,000 people were calculated to be directly employed in the industry.

However Tate and Lyle pulled out of Belize in 1985. Tate and Lyle had bought Corozal Sugar Factory in 1963 and subsequently built a new factory in Tower Hill, Orange Walk. It operated in Belize under the name of Belize Sugar Industries Ltd.

When I visited Belize in 1984 the sugar industry was in crisis - in 1982 world sugar prices had dropped by 60% and export earnings had fallen by Bze \$12 million that year. Sugar prices remained

low and in 1984 there were rumours of Tate and Lyle's desire to withdraw from Belize. In July 1985 the raw sugar price on the London commodity market was down to £62 a metric ton compared to £300 in 1980 (9).

I wrote to Tate and Lyle in the summer of 1985 to ask what the company's intentions were in Belize. They replied that they felt the industry should pass into the hands of Belizeans now the country was independent:

'We believe that in today's world it is no longer appropriate for an expatriate company to hold a large part of Belize's export earnings and of its gross national product.

In April 1983 therefore, discussions started with the Belize Government of that time, for the transfer of Tate and Lyle's ownership to Belizean interests. These have culminated in an agreement being signed very recently between the company and the new Government of Mr. Manuel Esquivel, whereby Tate and Lyle will retain 10% of its shareholding in Belize Sugar Industries, with the balance transferred to a B.S.I. Employee Holding Company and gradually paid for out of future dividends over the next nine years. Although Tate and Lyle will of course remain involved with the industry both through its minority shareholding and a long-term management contract with B.S.I., Belizeans, now having the controlling interest, will be able to take decisions on the future of their industry in accordance with local economic conditions.'

It is not hard to see why Tate and Lyle has in fact been keen to withdraw from Belize since the fall in sugar prices in 1980. Tate and Lyle has been diversifying in recent years. In its Annual Report published in January 1986, the company reported a loss of 11.6 million on its withdrawal from Belize (10). Trevor Petch in a report in 'The Guardian' on 8 November, 1985 (11), points out that Tate and Lyle has in fact managed to cut its losses by extracting money from a government fearful of the effect of closing down the only industry providing work in the north. The agreement reached in August 1985 means that:

' 82% of the shares in B.S.I. will be transferred for any dividends declared until 1994. It (Tate and Lyle) will retain full marketing and management control via a lucrative contract. It has received a sizeable tax refund. It will dispose of the last of its canefields.'

150 men were laid off from the Tower Hill, Orange Walk refinery in May 1985 although this refinery will continue to operate. 500 workers have been <sup>put</sup> out of work with the closure of the Libertad factory in Corozal District. These figures ignore the effects on sugar cane farmers of a lower sugar producing capacity and lower sugar prices. Corozal District has been plunged into an acute economic crisis. Fortunately 1986 has seen the sugar factory at Tower Hill return a profit of Bze \$3.5 million - the first since 1981 (12). The idea has been floated of starting ethanol production at the Libertad factory (using molasses bought from B.S.I.), but no contract has been drawn up. A resort complex of an 800 room hotel and 500 houses is to be built in Corozal,

providing an estimated 350 jobs and the filming of 'The Mosquito Coast' is currently taking place there and is expected to raise U.S.\$3-4 million (13).

Less dramatic but more hopeful is an agreement signed with U.S.A.I.D. for a 5-year commercialisation of alternative crops. Perhaps the events surrounding Tate and Lyle's investment will help switch the tendency to promote agricultural development for export to one directed towards building up a home market. The market would be small with only a 157,700 population (7), but the produce available is extremely limited. Most Belizean farmers are subsistence farmers who may have a little extra to sell in the local market now and again. but inefficient farming practices, lack of transport or difficult transport and no marketing facilities do not allow farmers to be ambitious. Ashcraft (5) says the government tends to worry about the lack of labour for the agricultural export operations, but what future is there for seasonal labourers with huge capital-intensive businesses. Small farmers should be offered financial incentives in the same way as big business has been. One third of the labour force work in agriculture (14) and including forestry and fishing this rises to 44.3% (5).

#### 1.4.4. Citrus production.

Citrus products (mostly orange and grapefruit concentrates) accounted for 10.5% of export earnings in 1983. The two plants involved in this production in Stann Creek district are both foreign owned. The two processing companies own 36% of the



groves and of some 360 growers who provide the rest of the fruit for the companies, 90% farm less than 8 hectares. There are disputes every year between the growers and processors over the prices the latter will pay for fruit (14).

With Coca Cola's plans to cultivate groves in the Hill Bank area in northern Belize (through the subsidiary Minute Maid), it looks as though even more small farmers will be forced into dependency on the processing companies and exploited. Ashcraft (5) points out that the government must not allow the small farmers to be squeezed out of the operation and see them form a rural proletariat. Work in large agricultural concerns producing for export is only seasonal and very low paid.

#### 1.4.5. Other agricultural products.

Other export commodities in Belize are bananas, mangoes, rice and honey. Honey provides 0.3% of export earnings and is the fifth foreign exchange earner. It is produced on a cooperative basis. Very small amounts of cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers and okra were exported to the U.S. in 1985-6.

Other agricultural products for the home market are maize, rice, red kidney beans, pigs, poultry, eggs, and tropical vegetables and fruits.

#### 1.4.6. Beef production.

For years there has been the expectation that beef production would develop to take an important place in Belize's economy. In

April 1985 the U.S. Department of Agriculture certified the Belize Meats Limited abbatoir, 51% owned by the government of Belize and 49% by the U.S. Contris Bros Corporation. It is only operating at 20% of its capacity and expectations in the business are not being fulfilled. The whole venture has been shrouded by secrecy which could be explained by the fear of provoking opposition to more land being made over to hamburger production (15). Local producers are not happy with the regulations being imposed by the Caribbean Development Bank who provided the money to build the abbatoir, as sales of livestock abroad have been limited and by deregulating district slaughterhouses, producers have been forced to go to B.M.I. which suffers from some corruption and makes extremely high charges for slaughtering.

#### 1.4.7. Fisheries.

Fish earnt 10.7% of Belize's income from exports in 1983. It was second only to sugar in the economy. There are four cooperatives employing 800 men and there are 400 independent fishermen (14). The cooperatives produce for export. Lobster tails are the most lucrative export commodity.

#### 1.4.8. Agriculture's future in Belize.

The E.E.C. has given money to build veterinary laboratories and helped the Belize Jamaica and Caribbean Food Corporation promote grain crops and livestock to replace imported goods. This year the E.E.C. has made loans to the Banana Control Board and to the B.S.I. U.S.A.I.D. recently funded a feasibility study for fresh milk marketing. The Commonwealth Development Corporation made a



loan to rehabilitate 3,800 acres and create 2,000 acres of new citrus orchards. Trinidad and Tobago has lent money to tackle irrigation problems. The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute is assisting to increase peanut yields for export. Hershey's from the U.S. are rehabilitating and planting 6,000 acres of cocoa and setting up a research laboratory too. These are but a few of several projects in Belize which receive foreign investment and/or aid and loans.

Most of this money is being used to develop export-oriented agricultural production. K.E. Wright (16) urges farmers to organise themselves into cooperatives. He states that 60% of Belizean farmers are milpa farmers who do not receive information or technical assistance because of the lack of communication, transport, finance and inequitable distribution of available resources. This means that they do not develop systematic production. Wright feels the whole process can be set in motion by supplying these farmers first and foremost with comprehensive practical advice - about who would buy which products and how to get in contact and transport the products there.

Richard Wilk from U.S.A.I.D. (17) has shown from a study of population movement just how important roads are to farmers in their practices. Villages near good rural roads, government services and crop markets, have grown. Milpa farmers are always keen to find land near roads as access to market to sell crops and to stores to buy seed, tools and agrochemicals, compensates for poor soil quality and high rents. Wilk shows that poor

quality farm-access roads do not provide milpa farmers with an incentive to stop them from moving on.

The banks have been criticised for their failure to support production industry and private individuals. According to Robert Nicolait and Assocs. (14) in 1981:

'The distribution industry, which consists primarily of retail and wholesale merchants, received the largest share (33%) of domestic credit from commercial banks. Agriculture received 22% of commercial bank credit in 1981 with distribution to the sugar industry (55%), citrus (9%), rice (12%), and bananas (12%).

Apparently there is too much risk involved in providing credit to the agricultural sector. All the banks in Belize are foreign owned and the August C.A.I.S. Belize Briefing (18) reported that Mr Esquivel had complained about their poor contribution to economic development in Belize and about the repatriation of profits.

#### 1.4.9. Manufacturing.

In 1982 agriculture constituted 14.4% of the G.D.P. and forestry and fishing 6%. This primary sector accounts for over two-thirds of domestic exports.

Manufacturing accounts for 12.2% of G.D.P. and Trades and Hotels for 17.9%. Manufacturing is largely processing local agricultural output, like the citrus processing plants. Otherwise industry is oriented towards the home market producing boats, furniture, clothes, flour, cigarettes, beer, fertilizer,

shoes, rum, batteries, wire products and remoulded tyres. One of the most important activities is construction.

#### 1.4.10. Tourism.

Under the P.U.P. and the Premiership of George Price tourism grew only modestly, partly because of a fear of its effects on Belizean identity and culture. However the U.D.P. see tourism as one of Belize's major sources of revenue. Americans go to the Cays for Xmas and Easter breaks and this could be expanded.

#### 1.4.11. Re-exports.

Belize had an important re-export trade to Mexico until the devaluation of the peso in 1982 which made imports from Belize too expensive. However the trade is picking up again.

#### 1.5. Aid.

In 1966 the country ceased to be under British Treasury control (which had commenced in September 1931). However Belize depended on Britain to fund capital expenditure. In 1971 Belize's capital revenue was Bze\$11,628,959 of which Bze\$ 11,228,509 were provided by U.K. Development Aid. Over the years this money has been channeled into Belize City airport and road construction. In December 1985 C.A.I.S. (19) reported that the High Commissioner, John Crosbie, has said that in future the emphasis will be on agricultural development. Belize also requires help to cover its current expenditure. It is appropriate to include here the information that British military spending in Belize is

estimated to represent 15% of Belize's national income. The British Army employs 600 locals (20).

The E.E.C. has been providing aid for an airport in Belmopan, schools, a radio station and broadcasting transmitter, a veterinary laboratory (21) and recently loans to the agricultural (export-oriented) and tourism sectors (22). Belize also deals with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We have already mentioned the American and Caribbean organisations which had provided aid and loans for agriculture.

Ashcraft(5) makes the perspicacious point that the nature of Belize's attempt to reduce its chronic trade deficit by producing and exporting agricultural products has moved the economy's dependence from the indirect control of developed countries through their market dominance to a much more direct control through their provision of financial assistance - loans, grants in-aid and protected markets.

Linguistically it is worth noting that all of the organisations we mentioned in relation to aid will use English in their contacts with Belize whether their representatives be from the U.K., the U.S., the Commonwealth, the Caribbean, or Europe.

The only linguistic counterpoint is Mexico's role in Belize. Mexico has given significant assistance to Belize in cultural, educational, technical and health agreements as well as credit for diesel imports and this has very much involved the Spanish-speaking mestizos of the north. Despite the desire of the P.U.P. to involve Belize in Central American regional organisations, the

Guatemalan claim made this difficult until recently and now Central America is very unstable and unpromising and Belize has ties with the Caribbean and Commonwealth.

#### 1.6. The unofficial economy.

There have been rather sensational reports in the press claiming drugs are now the most important product in Belize today. On the 28th October, 1984, 'The Observer' reported that 'drugs may be Belize's principal export', proving much more valuable than sugar, citrus and fish. On 17th March, 1985, 'The Observer' said that Belize was the fourth largest marijuana-exporting country in the world. It appears that respectable Belizean families, refugees and other aliens have been involved in the business.

The government is put under tremendous pressure by the U.S. government to carry out aerial spraying to destroy marijuana fields. In September 1985 the Senate Foreign Policy Committee demanded a commitment to spray or it would cut off U.S. aid (19). The U.D.P. government is rather worried about allowing aerial spraying as they feel the P.U.P. may well have lost a substantial number of votes in 1984 because Belizeans were opposed to aerial spraying either because they were involved in the business or they were affected by or concerned with the environmental effect.

Perhaps the best summary of marijuana's effect on the economy is the one made by Robert Nicolait and Assocs.(14):

'The quantity and value of marijuana on an annual basis is not known, but it is substantial. Illegal exportation of marijuana

brings substantial foreign exchange that is partly used to purchase imported items, thus the negative trade balance is somewhat overstated in official statistics.'

#### 1.7. Emigration.

Some Belizeans say there are as many, if not more, Belizeans in the U.S. as in Belize. Others will say there are 20-30,000 Belizeans there. When you talk to Belizeans, everybody seems to have worked temporarily in the U.S. or to have family there. There are communities in California, Chicago and New York. In Brooklyn there is a 'Little Belize'.

Ashcraft(5) makes the most conservative estimate of the number of Belizeans living in the U.S. - between 6-7,000. Collins (23) quotes the U.S. Census of 1970 which calculated that 14,221 Belizeans were in the country. However he also quotes the possible figure of 25,000 which he found in 'The Reporter' (Belize City) on 9 October, 1970 - apparently the U.S. Consulate had given the paper this figure. Galich (21) cites an E.F.E. report of 22 September, 1982, which stated 40,000 Belizeans were in the U.S. 'The Reporter' of 28 April, 1985, reported Ministry of Home Affairs, Curl Thompson, saying 400 Belizeans left for the States every month with legal documents. Robert Nicolait and Assocs. (14) remark:

'The population statistics suggest that during the last decade perhaps as many as one out of every eight Belizean residents emigrated' - 1,200 - 2,000 each year.

Ashcraft (5) details that in 1967 the American Consulate expected to grant 700 or 800 immigrant visas. Usually the majority of these visas are issued to women who are going to be maids. Grant (24) explains that many women have no choice but to go to the States as domestics so that they can send back money for their families to live on.

The demand for visas is obviously greater than the number that are actually granted. Ashcraft (5) again says:

'The Consulate believes that most of the people issued with 'non-immigrant visas' remain in the U.S. to become illegal immigrants. About 90% of the 'tourists' go to the U.S. looking for work, and about 30% of these remain until they are found and sent back to British Honduras.'

Grant (24) reports that the civil service appear to have developed the habit of taking their long vacation in the U.S. to visit relatives and engage in remunerative employment despite the fact it is in violation of their leave conditions and their conditions of entry into the U.S.

A number of people may also go to the States through Mexico and over the border through the 'back-door'.

Not surprisingly it is the Creoles in Belize City who emigrate usually, as they are most affected by unemployment (in 1974 Weed (25) quotes an estimate of 15% unemployment in Belize). The penetration of U.S. culture through films, literature, television, radio, U.S. tourists and businessmen make the U.S.



way of life smack of glamour and Belizean success stories in the U.S. add to this image. A significant sector of the Belizean population identifies with this way of life. Many Belizeans receive money from the States to live on and it often pays for an all important secondary education. Ashcraft (5) states that 22,000 Belizeans were in receipt of remittances. A more recent indication of the importance of remittances is Robert Nicolait and Assocs.'s (14) comment that:

'Another factor contributing to the purchasing power of Belizeans is the remittances (money orders) sent by relatives living abroad that may contribute as much as 10% to the G.D.P.'

The high level of emigration has a drastic consequence for Belize's development as a viable economic and psychological entity. A vicious circle operates whereby young often educated and technically-trained Belizeans leave for the class of jobs and pay only available abroad and yet Belize will never be able to offer these opportunities whilst it cannot mobilise these human resources for its own development. There is a shortage of professionals, including technicians, administrators and managers - 60% of these posts are held by foreign-born persons (14).

Many Corozaleniens (inhabitants of the northern district of Corozal in Belize) feel the emigrants are taking the easy way out and not fighting for their own people - that they lack national pride and respect.

#### 1.7. Linguistic consequences of compromised independence.

English is the official language in Belize first and foremost because it is a colonial legacy. Currently its importance is perpetuated because contacts regarding economic aid, investment (for example, land, cattle-raising, citrus processing) and trade (export of food stuffs) are carried out in English as this is the dominant language of the U.S., the U.K., the Commonwealth and the E.E.C. These conditions provide little incentive to change English as the language of instruction in schools.

The linguistic pressure exercised by the presence of 1600-1800 soldiers in Belize cannot be ignored either. If tourism expands Belizeans will be increasingly exposed to English speakers - something which they have been noticing already.

But for reasons of self-image I believe the high level of emigration to the U.S. and the identification with the way of life there, and the status or prestige accruing to those who manage to adopt it, must provide as great an incentive as any to speak English and Creole as opposed to Spanish. There is a considerable amount of contact between the people of Chetumal in Mexico and Corozal in Belize, but it is not of national importance. Belize does not belong to any specifically regional organisation except C.A.R.I.C.O.M. and its economic ties with Central America are negligible - the contact with Spanish-speakers and Latin culture is really very physically limited to refugees and seasonal workers and a very few Guatemalan and Mexican visitors. Cuba would like to have more ties with Belize and has offered grants for Belizean students to go and study

there and has taken an interest in cane production but political pressure means Belize does not take up the Cuban offers.

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## Chapter 2

### Belizean Society

#### 2.1. Belizean Society's Ethnic Make-Up

Reservations must be made over the use of the term 'ethnic' group and usually this study will specify whether one is referring to a racial, cultural, linguistic or social group. However 'ethnic' seems appropriate here as there is still a correlation, if sometimes tenuous, between two or more of these group features which remains from the arrival of the original immigrants in the colony.

See Tables 1 and 2 for the breakdown of the population according to race and language respectively. We will look more closely at these figures in consideration of a certain linguistic assimilation of the races in Section 5.5 of Chapter 5.

Table 1 (1)  
Percent Population by Race and District

DISTRICT	Population	Creole	East Indian	Chinese	Maya	Ketchi	Garifuna	White	Mestizo	Oth/N.S	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
BELIZE	50,801	75.1	1.5	0.3	0.7	0.1	3.2	1.1	13.1	4.8	100.0
City	39,771	76.0	1.5	0.4	0.3	0.1	3.5	0.9	12.2	5.1	100.0
Rural	11,030	71.8	1.5	0.0	2.1	0.1	2.3	1.6	16.4	4.1	100.0
COROZAL	22,902	16.9	2.9	0.1	13.8	0.3	2.3	1.7	58.4	3.6	100.0
Town	6,899	30.5	1.8	0.5	0.0	0.0	3.2	0.3	59.2	4.5	100.0
Rural	16,003	11.1	3.3	0.0	19.7	0.4	1.9	2.2	58.0	3.4	100.0
ORANGE											
WALK	22,870	11.3	0.2	0.0	6.8	0.2	2.3	13.5	64.5	1.1	100.0
Town	8,439	19.7	0.4	0.1	3.8	0.0	5.1	0.2	68.9	1.8	100.0
Rural	14,431	6.4	0.2	0.0	8.6	0.3	0.6	21.3	61.9	0.7	100.0
STANN											
CREEK	14,181	32.9	2.0	0.1	5.2	0.2	45.6	0.5	10.5	2.9	100.0
Dangringa	6,661	21.6	1.4	0.3	0.3	0.0	70.0	0.4	1.8	4.2	100.0
Rural	7,520	43.0	2.7	0.0	9.7	0.4	23.7	0.5	18.3	1.7	100.0
TOLEDO	11,762	11.9	8.6	0.0	25.4	31.5	12.7	1.0	5.9	3.0	100.0
Punta Gorda	2,396	23.6	4.4	0.4	3.3	1.1	48.3	0.9	8.9	9.5	100.0
Rural	9,366	9.0	9.6	0.0	31.1	39.3	3.4	1.0	5.1	1.3	100.0
CAYO	22,837	31.0	1.1	0.0	4.6	0.4	1.9	8.0	49.0	3.8	100.0
San Ignacio	5,616	28.1	1.5	0.1	1.0	0.5	1.2	1.1	59.0	7.5	100.0
Belmopan	2,935	56.8	3.2	0.0	0.5	0.1	9.3	3.9	22.9	3.3	100.0
Rural	14,286	26.9	0.4	0.0	6.9	0.4	0.7	11.6	50.5	2.5	100.0
TOTAL	145,353	39.7	2.1	0.1	6.8	2.7	7.6	4.2	33.1	3.6	100.0



Table 2(2)  
Percent Population by Language Spoken and District

DISTRICT	population	English	Spanish	Maya	Ketchi	Low	Garífuna	Other/ Not stated	Total
						German			
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
BELIZE	50,801	89.4	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	3.0	100.0
City	39,771	91.0	4.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	3.3	100.0
Rural	11,030	83.8	13.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.8	2.1	100.0
COROZAL	22,902	20.0	71.5	3.5	0.1	1.4	1.5	2.0	100.0
Town	6,899	36.1	60.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	2.0	100.0
Rural	16,003	13.0	76.3	5.0	0.2	2.0	1.5	2.0	100.0
ORANGE									
WALK	22,870	15.4	68.1	1.1	0.1	13.3	1.5	0.4	100.0
Town	8,439	31.2	64.1	0.5	0.0	0.0	3.3	0.9	100.0
Rural	14,431	6.1	70.5	1.4	0.2	21.1	0.5	0.2	100.0
STANN									
CREEK	14,181	43.5	7.0	4.7	0.2	0.0	42.8	1.6	100.0
Dangranga	6,661	26.7	1.7	0.1	0.0	0.0	68.5	2.8	100.0
Rural	7,520	58.3	11.7	8.7	0.4	0.0	20.1	0.6	100.0
TOLEDO	11,762	25.4	5.1	25.5	31.5	0.0	10.7	1.8	100.0
Punta Gorda	2,396	44.9	5.4	2.7	1.0	0.0	39.5	6.4	100.0
Rural	9,366	20.4	5.0	31.3	39.3	0.0	3.3	0.6	100.0
CAYO	22,837	47.6	40.2	3.7	0.1	6.6	0.5	1.2	100.0
San Ignacio	5,616	63.5	33.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	2.7	100.0
Belmopan	2,935	81.5	15.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	1.1	100.0
Rural	14,286	34.3	48.1	5.9	0.2	10.5	0.3	0.6	100.0
TOTAL	145,353	50.6	31.6	3.8	2.6	3.3	6.0	2.0	100.0

### 2.1.1. The Creoles

The first British pirates or buccaneers were using the Belizean coast as a refuge before 1640. Eventually these adventurers began to extract logwood and they imported slaves from the British Caribbean because they needed labour. By 1745 slaves constituted 71% of the population, not counting the Maya population, and 86% by 1800 (3).

Emancipation took place in 1837-8, but the ex-slaves continued to work in the logging camps and as the forestry interests still required their labour they were always discouraged from cultivation - slaves were not allowed to cultivate agricultural products and land was no longer granted free by the Crown from the time of the abolition of slavery in Belize. A system of hiring workers on advanced binding contracts kept the Creoles dependent on their work in their camps to pay their debts. This community mainly based itself in Belize City which was the trading centre as the logwood, mahogany and chicle all came down to the mouth of the Belize River to be exported. With the decline of the timber industry the Creoles today form the mass of the urban labour force, which is mainly located in Belize City.

As Grant (4) stated: 'The Creole culture has a distinctive occupational pattern'. The Creoles with a high and middle economic status are not interested in business ventures but covet professional occupations with the civil service or as lawyers and

doctors. They are also managers of banks and commercial houses and owners of the big hotels. Status is linked to occupation. Social mobility upwards and downwards does occur within the Creole high and middle classes. The middle-class Creoles are less secure and loss of employment or the failure to gain a scholarship when you are young means a fall in status. These people also seek work in the Civil Service and as teachers and nurses, or as employees in banks, department stores and supermarkets. Some own small shops.

Those Creoles who have an established high economic status tend to be lighter-skinned because of the higher incidence of white racial admixture than those middle-class Creoles who are not so well-established.

Creoles in the lower economic strata are more or less purely African racially. They suffer from a high level of unemployment and underemployment. They are self-employed artisans, labourers in the construction industry, for example, fishermen, street vendors and domestics.

During my stay in Belize in 1984, a number of Belizeans said that Creoles identify with an urban lifestyle and look down on agricultural activity. There are Creole peasant farmers in Belize District and along the Southern coast, but for most even the possibility of work in the cane-fields in the north is not attractive, despite the unemployment in Belize City. These poorer Creole families are often headed by females. They also do not identify with the metropolis - in the past Great Britain and

now the U.S. or the Caribbean, like the higher classes. They have retained aspects of African culture.

The mixing of a British and African culture has produced a distinctive cooking and a Creole language. Many people in and around Belize City talk 'broad' or 'raw' Creole, but the wealthy Creoles will speak a Creole which is closer to standard West Indian English. Most Creoles are Anglican or Methodist.

'Creole' is a cultural rather than racial category. Creoles include white settlers, those who have more or less black or white blood in them, and the majority who are overwhelmingly African in racial terms. A person of the Mestizo race who has grown-up in Belize City will be a Creole as her cultural affinity defines her group identity. Grant(4) describes 'Creole' thus:

'the concept is used primarily to identify a non-Indian or Mestizo way of life and a set of values derived, with local adaptation, from the Anglo-Saxon countries, mainly Britain, the West Indies, and from Africa.'

#### 2.1.2. The Mestizos.

This group arrived along with Spaniards and Maya Indians from 1847-53, the years of the Caste War on the Mexican Yucatan Peninsula, centred in Quintana Roo. The Santa Cruz Maya Indians rebelled against the Spaniards during this period and afterwards there was internecine strife between Indian groups - the Icaicha Indians were not as interested in insurgency as the Santa Cruz - and Indian, Mestizo and Spanish refugees flooded into the north

of Belize and some went as far as Cayo and Toledo districts, transforming the Creole population of Belize into a minority. Census figures offer very different pictures of the numbers involved. However the new cultural influence from over the border was undeniable as Spanish local government institutions were set up in 1858 for the northern district (now Corozal and Orange Walk districts) and the Roman Catholic Church started its missionary work at that time in Belize.

In Corozal the estate owners encouraged the refugees to become tenants and plant sugar-cane as the logwood and mahogany had been cut out. By 1857 the area was exporting sugar but control of this export industry was in the hands of the five families who owned steam plants. These families were Spaniards of pure European extraction. In the social strata which now characterized Corozal the Mestizo engaged in the business of chicle extraction and accumulated capital to lease large plots of land. The lowest stratum consisted of the Maya Indians who worked as cane cutters or chicleros. The system of social control exercised by the sugar haciendas in the Yucatán before the Caste Wars was reproduced in Corozal District. Villages of Maya Indians were forced into dependency on powerful Mestizos and debt peonage of the kind still found on coffee plantations in the south of Mexico today, was practised.

This system has come to an end with the decline of the family owned plantations and the appearance of a central sugar factory at Libertad in 1935. In 1963 Tate and Lyle bought this up. This has not improved the lot of many Indians who simply came to form

part of the agro-proletariat cutting cane for big cane-farmers, but a few have become cane farmers themselves. However they face the competition from the richer Mestizos who own more and better land, enjoy bigger cane licences, and better transport and credit facilities. The Indian cane farmers did prosper a little until the recent recession in sugar prices. Now Tate and Lyle has pulled out of Corozal and halved its work force in Orange Walk, the Northern Districts face a grave economic collapse.

The Mestizos from the North continued to accumulate capital in sugar-cane cultivation and other agricultural activities and over the years they have penetrated the higher class of Corozal formed by the few descendents of European Spanish families. Many Mestizos have successfully engaged in transportation and commerce and some have moved to Belize City and become prominent businessmen. The Mestizos' economic base gives them sufficient power and social influence to challenge the social dominance of the Creoles.

There are Mestizos in other districts too. In Belize City they are Creolised now. In Cayo and Toledo many came from Guatemala originally - however they do not appear to have maintained the contact or have remained so strongly influenced as the northern Mestizos are by Mexico.

### 2.1.3. The Maya

The Maya were the indigenous people of Belize. The height of their civilisation there was around the eighth century, but they

left for unknown reasons in the fourteenth century. It is believed that the population was three or four times denser than it is now and this is often mentioned in support of the agricultural development of the country as a considerably large population managed to feed themselves.

The British settlers did not come into much contact with the Maya until the eighteenth century when they were going deep into the jungle in search of timber, where the Maya had taken refuge.

Most of the Maya in Belize today are reimmigrants. We have already covered the arrival of the Yucatecan Maya and their fate in Corozal District. Very few Maya in the north are monolingual as they tend to be in the south. The Yucatecan Maya have been adopting a 'Mestizo' identity by learning Spanish in order to escape the prejudice and discrimination they face as Indians. As R said:

"hasta existe un cierto, tal vez un poco de vergüenza, ¿verdad? de que por ejemplo uno del pueblo hable Maya...si hablan Maya es como decir pues es más bajo"

Some have prospered producing cane and also the sugar industry brought in Spanish-speakers from neighbouring countries, especially Mexico, and consequently people in the rural areas around Corozal have stopped speaking Maya:

R: "creo que ahorita en las áreas rurales ya hay una transformación tremenda socialmente. Ya el Maya, ya él ya tiene su camión, tiene ya su televisor, ya él ya está dentro de la



estructura capitalista, ¿no? ya modernista, ¿no?

All this is rather ironic from the perspective of the former Prime Minister's glorification of the Maya heritage and civilisation at the roots of Belizean identity, which has brought about a small 'renacimiento cultural'(R).

In the south the way of life and the identity of the Mopan and particularly the Ket'chi Maya is still in tact mainly because of their remote and isolated villages. They are basically milpa farmers.

The Mopan Maya emigrated from San Luis in the Petén province of Guatemala to San Antonio in Toledo, Belize in 1883 to avoid military service. They founded San Antonio in 1886. Gregory (5) states that some 1,500 Mopan Maya were in Belize in 1976. His article investigates how they are becoming increasingly assimilated into the national economy. He describes how they now own their own land, or have joined cooperatives, participate in the national market and are also businessmen and wage-earners. They also avail themselves of the Belizean education and health services. Apparently despite all of this assimilation into outside institutions, they still preserve their ethnic identity. However the loss of this might just be a question of time.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Ket'chi Indians moved from the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala to San Pedro. The Ket'chi were refugees from repression like the Mopan and they were originally imported to work in the cocoa plantations of the Sarstoon River Valley.

#### 2.1.4. The Garífuna.

When Columbus arrived in the Caribbean, Caribs and Arawaks lived on the islands. Some of the slaves brought to work on the plantations on the Windward Islands ran away to St. Vincent where they mixed with the Island Carib. Hence the anthropologists' term for the Garífuna - the Black Carib. They strongly resisted British attempts to penetrate their territory in the north of St Vincent and when they were overcome, they were deported in 1796 and dumped on Roatan Island in the Bay of Honduras.

From there the Garífuna moved to the mainland from Mosquitia to Belize. Apparently there were 150 in Stann Creek District by 1882. Civil war in Honduras in 1832 caused many Garífuna to flee to Belize - their landing on 19 November is celebrated as Garífuna Settlement Day.

The Garífuna predominate in Dangringa and Punta Gorda and they have traditionally made their living fishing and farming. The only Garífuna village which is not on the coast is Seine Bight in the Carib Reserve. According to Government publications (3 & 7) the Garífuna were dispossessed of their land and only allowed to lease land from the Crown. However the former colonial authorities claimed that the Carib and Maya reserves created in 1872 were to provide the milpa farmers of these groups with the expanses of land they required to farm in the traditional way.

Since the 1930s the Garífuna have sought wage-earning employment in the citrus industry. They have a reputation for valuing

education very highly and for being very competent polyglots. Many Garífuna are rural teachers. This could have been seen as a challenge to Creole hegemony in the 1930s but now many people comment that they are the only ones prepared to go and work in the bush. More recently according to Brockmann (7) they have acquired government positions and many are policemen. Gullick (8) is of the opinion that 'only the more educated Caribs in Belize can be claimed to be multicultural'.

The Garífuna language and culture is still very much alive:

R "yo respeto los Garífuna. Ellos han mantenido su cultura más que el Maya, más que el Mestizo..yo creo que es el caribe, es el Garífuna, una gente más unida que el Mestizo - unida y también esta unión hace que ellos mantengan sus costumbres, tradiciones, como familia. Mientras el Mestizo no. El Mestizo ya se modernizó. El Mestizo en el norte después de dos décadas de poco dinero e industria y eso, pues ello cambió la vida social del Mestizo y ya esta unidad no existe."

#### 2.1.5. The East Indians

There are three sizeable communities of East Indians - one in Belize City, and two farming communities - one mainly producing cane in Calcutta, Corozal District, and the other rice in Forest Home, Toledo District. In Corozal District they were referred to as 'hindus' as well as East Indians and they spoke Creole or 'coolie'. They appear to intermarry with Creoles quite frequently.

Historically they were first brought to Belize in 1858, when the British government decided to take 1,000 Sepoy Mutineers and their families from India to work in the forestry industry. In the 1880s Indians went from Calcutta to work on the sugar estates, particularly in Toledo District where U.S. confederates had settled after the 1868 War of Secession. Some East Indians drifted from the West Indies to Toledo as well. But Belize was not an agricultural society at that stage and as the sugar industry declined towards the end of the nineteenth century the importation of East Indian labour came to a halt. Their small numbers and lack of contact with their civilisation has led them to become Creolised. Some East Indians are teachers.

According to Robert Nicolait and Associates (9), a small number of Hindi-speaking East Indian merchants live in Belize City and Orange Walk, but they are relative newcomers and have no cultural ties with descendants of earlier immigrants.

#### 2.1.6. The Chinese

Like the East Indians they were brought to Belize as indentured labourers in the 1860s and 1870s for the sugar industry. They were mistreated and many died of disease. Many fled to live with Maya groups as far afield as the Yucatán.

More recent immigrants arrived after the Japanese occupation of parts of China before the Second World War.

Today the Chinese are mostly to be found in urban areas running their own businesses - shops, night clubs, restaurants and small

hotels.

#### 2.1.7. The Lebanese

They arrived in the early twentieth century and settled in San Ignacio, at the highest navigable point of the Belize River, to act as middlemen in the timber and chicle trades. They also brought general supplies into the area. Apparently there are Syrians too, These Belizeans have mixed with the Mestizos and are Roman Catholic.

#### 2.1.8. The Mennonites

I only mention the Mennonites because they account for most of the 'white' racial category in Table 1. They will not be described in detail as they are peripheral to the Belizean nation. They arrived in 1959 and live according to the precepts of the Bible in remote agricultural communities. They speak Low German (see Table 2). They are exempt from military service and the social security system provided they obey the law, pay taxes and produce foods for the national market.

#### 2.2 The myth of racial harmony.

Belize has a reputation for racial tolerance. John Lloyd Stevens writing in Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan, published in 1841, waxes lyrical on the subject of race relations in Belize:

'Before I had been an hour in Belize I learned that great work of practical amalgamation, subject of much angry controversy at

home, had been going on quietly for generations; that colour was considered more a matter of taste; and that some of the more respectable inhabitants had black wives and mongrel children, whom they educated with as much care, and made money for with as much zeal, as if their skins were perfectly white.'

The histories of Belize written before her independence dwell on the enlightened treatment of slaves by their British Honduran masters in comparison with the conditions which prevailed in the rest of the Caribbean. Waddell (10) explains that the working relationships of slaves and their supervisors had to be more liberal because the lone supervisors were vulnerable when the slaves had to work with axes in the logging camps which were deep in the jungle. Also the slaves could choose to escape to neighbouring Latin American countries where slavery had been abolished. Finally slaves were more expensive in Belize and their labour was much prized.

However the history of Belize that has been produced since independence mainly for use in schools (6) claims Belizean slaves had their share of inhumane abuse and that there were several revolts. It is pointed out that blacks fought with the Spanish in the Battle of St George's Cay in 1868 whereas colonial histories emphasise that slaves and settlers fought side by side against the Spanish. The Belizeans need to assert their differences over the interpretation of history with the former colonialists, but Belizeans talk as glibly today of miscegenation being common practice and of it being the solution

to social tensions as the colonialists did. Gregg (12) said of Cayo district that there was intermarriage between the Mestizo and the Indian, the Creoles and the Lebanese:

'All share equally their loyalty to the British Crown, and their enthusiasm for the new state of Belize, for they are keenly conscious of their common nationality.'

In Corozal the following was expressed:

EW ¿no habrá diferencias entre los Mestizos y los criollos?

A Técnicamente tiene que haber una diferencia porque es natural - no podemos desmentir eso. Pero hay que cimentar esa psicología, esa conciencia del nacionalismo propio del beliceño. Eso queremos a pesar de que han habido divisiones - siempre van a haber divisiones étnicas. Por el intermestizaje entre todas nuestras razas eventualmente vamos a cimentar un pueblo unido en toda su conciencia nacional

EW ¿Y ahorita se casan mucho entre ellos los Mestizos y los criollos?

A Sí, ¿cómo no?

EW ¿Y los otros grupos también?

A El mestizaje es grande, es grandísimo. Belice es, como dicen en inglés, un 'boiling pot'. Es una intermezcla grandísima ahorita que el criollo se casa con un Maya, un Maya se casa con un Mestizo, un Mestizo se casa con uno de raza africana, de manera que no hay separación en puntos de raza, porque en mi



familia, digamos, hay gente de raza de color africano, gente clara, gente, digamos una intermezcla grande. Así es que estamos cimentando el pueblo beliceño que eventualmente, como pasó, por ejemplo, en México, en Veracruz, que los cubanos de raza africana- ex-esclavos - fueron llevados a Veracruz, para trabajar allá en los trapiches, en el desarrollo del azúcar. Ellos intermezclaron con el Maya, con el Mestizo y ahora están absorbidos y ya ahora Ud. ve la gente morena, pero ya está cambiando de color, ya de pelo, ya hablan solamente español, igual como pasó por ejemplo en Veracruz, como pasó, por ejemplo, en la costa de la mosquita allá en Honduras, en Nicaragua y igualmente en Costa Rica, igualmente pasa en Belice.'

It's rather interesting that the hybrid serves to assimilate the former Africans . However as we shall see the miscegenation that does occur is producing a hispanised Creole identity.

A ends up recognizing that the miscegenation which is occurring is not currently absorbing the Creoles:

"Yo creo que lo opuesto es más fácil. Que el yucateco la pierde (la cultura) y no el africano porque el africano se impone sobre la mujer yucateca o mestiza a que ella hagase su cultura de él. Entonces ella y sus hijos empiecen a hablar sólo criollo y los hijos ya no quieren hablar español, no quieren hablar Maya. No quieren hablar nada, sólo criollo.

EW: Eso es lo que pasa aquí?

A Eso es lo que está pasando aquí en Corozal. Está pasando en

la ciudad de Belice, está pasando en Orange Walk y en varias partes incluso acá."

### 2.3 The true extent of miscegenation

Miscegenation has undeniably been a feature of Belizean society. The urban environment of Belize City has been home to it ever since the settlement's origins. As we mentioned it is rather overstated. Zee Edgell in her novel 'Beka Lamb'(12) gives one view of the situation:

'It was a relatively tolerant town where at least 6 races with their roots in other districts of the country, in Africa, the West Indies, Central America, Europe, North America, Asia and other places, lived in a kind of harmony. In three centuries, miscegenation, like logwood, had produced all shades of black and brown, not grey or purple, but certainly there were a few people in town known as red ibos. Creole was regarded as a language to be proud of by most people in the country, served as a means of communication amongst the races. Still, in the town and in the country, as people will do everywhere, each race held varying degrees of prejudice concerning the others.'

The idea that there is extensive miscegenation despite racial prejudices is repeated by Robert Nicolait & Assocs.(9):

'For practical purposes, race - referring to physical anthropological differences - has little meaning in Belize. The population is simply overwhelmingly racially heterogenous. Still according to self-classification in the 1980 census, ethnic

distinctions abound.'

However the miscegenation is in fact limited as we shall see and this self-classification along ethnic lines is obviously involved. There are prejudices expressed about the cultural 'out-group' in Belize although most people would assure you that all the different groups to be found in Belize get along just fine. The interaction is fluid and untroubled amongst secondary groups in the neighbourhood and at work, but uneasy with regard to primary groups:

EW "Would you say that amongst all the different groups in Belize like the East Indians, the Creoles, the Spanish, the Caribs - do they all get on well?

B We all mix.... we speak to them, but we don't mix. I mean it's hard for you to marry with a coloured man - it's not in us. It's not in us. Now the younger generation, they're quite easy about it. They look at 'The Jeffersons', you know, the coloured comedy of 'The Jeffersons'... It's just that we don't hate them, we don't despise them, but we mix with them..If a Chinese would come here and live next door we'd be friendly with him..that way we don't have that thing thank God - especially if a stranger would come we'd go out of our way to help that stranger you know."

L judged that people of different cultures mixed as secondary groups but not as primary groups:-

"We find ourselves in an atmosphere of friendliness and we all, I can say we all - we are social. We don't believe in mixing that

very, very close like amongst our Spanish people. Mostly Creoles and Spanish would mix more than Spanish or Mennonite and Spanish or Hindus. The Hindus usually keep to their own culture - they try to follow their own culture. They try to follow their own culture the Hindus, the Caribs, Chinese. They are very friendly. They do mix. We mix to a certain extent but then they try to keep their own culture. Maybe in the future it will change. They will find out that Chinese born here, Hindus born here, Mennonites born here - this is their country after all."

Zee Edgell(12) talks about the prevailing attitudes towards marriage between Creoles and Caribs:

'Of many stories about him that circulated amongst the children of the town, one said that in his youth, Maskman had been a handsome 'sweet boy' who, during a sojourn in Stann Creek, a coastal town south of Belize, compromised the daughter of a Carib man who had befriended him. Maskman could not marry the girl, though he loved her, without losing face in the Creole community, whose members seldom married among the caribs, although these groups shared, in varying degrees, a common ancestry.'

In Corozal Edna Koenig (13) found that the incidence of mixed marriage was low. She found cases of marriage between the following groups : Spanish (Mestizos) and Creole, mixed Creole and Spanish with East Indians and East Indians with Spanish. However it had been reported to her that neither the Spanish nor the East Indians approved of mixed marriages and the Mayans frowned upon unions with Creoles.

In Orange Walk Brockmann (14) established that:

'Intermarriage is uncommon, being 12.1% of all current Orange Walk Town Church, civil and common law marriages.'

W said that when she first went to Dangringa she was frightened because she had never seen so many Caribs together and that when her daughter went to Belize City to go to school she felt uneasy in the Creole environment. However they both soon overcame their initial 'culture shock'. W says she would be inclined to accept her daughter marrying a darker-skinned Creole but her husband would be opposed. W's father was Honduran and her mother Maya-Mestizo. Her husband's parents were German. Interestingly he cannot speak English - only Spanish. W described herself as 'Creole' and this throws some light on the racial, cultural and linguistic content this term can embrace in Belize.

That groups should experience a certain 'culture shock' as they come into contact with each other is hardly surprising given their geographical distribution (See Table 1). The Creoles determine the character of Belize City as do the Garífuna that of Dangringa and the Mestizos that of Corozal Town and Benque Viejo. Historically the different racial and cultural groups ended up in Belize through no choice of their own and since then they have maintained contact with groups outside of Belize. In the north the Maya and Mestizos are still much influenced by their Mexican neighbours who are often also relatives. In the west and south the different Maya groups continue to live as they did in Guatemala and the Garífuna keep in contact with similar groups

all the way down the Central American Atlantic coast. The Creoles relate to Caribbean culture such as Rastafarianism, as well as with U.S. black culture. These contacts have seen centrifugal forces counteracting the development of an indigenous identity. As Brockmann (7) points out it was only in the 1950s that these groups found themselves coexisting in one political and economic framework:

'...a series of events occurred which brought previously separated ethnic categories into greatly increased interaction: universal adult suffrage, elected nationalistic government, constitutional moves to domestic autonomy (completed in 1964), expansion of the educational system, and improved communications'

A poignant observation was made by L who said Belizeans were not divided to any significant extent because all the sociocultural groups were poor. It is true that the contrast between rich and poor in Belize is minimal compared to the situation in the rest of Central America and the Caribbean.

The separation of the groups geographically and the lack of contact between them meant that cultural differences did stand out but also that there was no friction between the groups as their territory and interests were delimited. Grant (4) comments of Jack Downie, a senior Economic Advisor to the British Treasury, who produced an economic report on Belize in 1959:

'Like so many visiting observers, he did not appreciate that the apparent absence of racial and cultural friction was due to a

large extent to the social and occupational distance separating the two major cultural groups.'

Only now with improved communications and working within a national economy and political structure are these different interests in competition as we shall see in section 2.5.

Whether or not there are more mixed marriages today than there were before, they nevertheless seem to have become significant to Belizeans in that the older Belizeans recognize their own prejudices and that the younger people are less troubled by the possibility of giving offence. Also it appears that to some extent the ideological resistance to mixed marriages has been different from the actual practice.

Group judgements on an out-group tend to be based on stereotypes:

'Close ethnic interaction does not generally reduce stereotypical views of other categories.' (7).

But this does not prevent a person from one cultural group in fact being very close to one from another. I suspect an urban environment allows people to pick their company according to their prejudices, whereas low population density in the rural areas brings members of different groups together in a community. This familiarity might eventually cross the bounds between secondary group and primary group interaction for the different cultural groups. In Corozal J drew a clear distinction between Creoles in Belize City and elsewhere (p176). This distinction is also reported by Marcella Mazzarelli (15) in Cayo:



'Negros are considered by the Ladino to be crude, unrefined, dishonest, unwilling to work, unclean and sexually different, if not dangerous. Though Cayo and Belize have large negro populations they are not thought of as having the 'same type' of Negro. Negros living in Cayo are recognizable as individuals, each has a known history in the town, and each has made adjustments to living in the area. They are considered to be less objectionable than the Belize Negro who is seen as the 'typical' Negro

In Orange Walk Brockmann (7) reports that the Mestizos reacted to Creoles from Belize City more negatively than to ones from Orange Walk as the <sup>former</sup> were associated with thieving.

In Benque Viejo, Orange Walk and Corozal we have seen that the primary group does resist the entrance of different racial and cultural features. However in Corozal people had very mixed backgrounds or were in mixed marriages. Those who come from Corozal Town tend to be Mestizos who identify with Mexico but others were Creolised - more so if they came from surrounding villages or from outside the district. As we have mentioned Le Page (16) found much 'mixing' in Cayo District which he believes could stabilize in a Hispanised Creole Belizean identity (See Chapter 4).

#### 2.4 Lack of national identity.

This hidden steady process of Creolization has been ignored on an official level. There is no reference to it apart from Le Page's descriptions. As we shall see in the next section the P.U.P. has

favoured a hispanised Maya identity for Belize and the embryonic development of an indigenous identity which is basically Creole would not have been well-received.

P.U.P. governments blamed the apparent lack of national identity on the 'divide and rule' policies of the colonial authorities and the fears aroused by the Guatemalan claim to Belize.

In the school history (6) we find the following sort of observations:

'Each group was encouraged to hate and fear the others: to feel as if they were better than every other group. They were taught to look up to the white leaders, the merchants and landowners who controlled the economy.'

P.U.P. respondents voiced the same views of the English maintaining control through 'divide and rule' policies. Before independence the target for the dissatisfaction with the economic, political and social situation in Belize was the colonial power. Indeed some of this tension was expressed in the appearance of a certain African nationalist, black power sentiment. Evan Hyde (17), editor of *Amandala*, the newspaper which speaks for this black African identity, had studied in the States in the sixties and is the figurehead for this identity among the Creole population. So important was the mood that V.S. Naipaul (18) writing for the *Daily Telegraph* in 1969 saw Price losing his position not because of his Mestizo identity but because of his 'white' traits. George Price's mother was a Maya Indian and his

father Creole. He could present himself as a Mestizo or a 'white' European type and his racial make-up has been interpreted in whichever fashion suits his political opponents. The Creoles used to condemn him for denying his black blood and presenting himself as a white. George Price on the other hand has rather tended to present himself as a Maya-Mestizo.

However concern for group identity maintenance has not only revolved around the ravages of the colonial power. The Guatemalan issue has been emotional simply because the Creoles would see a Guatemalan take over as a threat to their very existence. Their colour, their hybrid African and British language and culture and their Protestant religion would not endear the Creoles to the Generals in Guatemala City.

The fear of losing power because of a sudden move from a majority to a minority position if Belize associated itself with a Central American political or economic organisation is at the root of Creole opposition to 'Latinization'.

Conversely the Mestizos are reluctant for Belize to be too closely associated with the Caribbean. Belize is in CARICOM (the Caribbean Common Market). Guatemala's claim made it difficult for the P.U.P. to pursue their desire for links with Central America, but the Mestizos are no more willing to see their identity overpowered than the Creoles are.

Finally we must discuss the relationship which holds between the Creoles and Garífuna. The Creoles have great distaste for the Garífuna. As Gullick (8) explains:

'The Creoles look down on the Garífuna, especially their language and they maintain an amused superior attitude towards them.'

However they have earned respect in some quarters for maintaining their language and culture (R) and they have managed to penetrate occupations which were the preserve of the Creoles - as teachers and policemen, for example. Brockmann (7) says of the Garífuna:

'Black Caribs have traditionally been a poor and despised ethnic category. They have a strong sense of ethnic identity and have worked hard to improve their position. If reports of past discrimination toward Black Caribs are correct, they have made significant progress from their position early in the twentieth century.'

Many Garífuna vote for the 'Christian Democratic Party' but they are politically allied to the Creoles because both perceive the growth of the Hispanic population as a threat to their very existence.

## 2.5 Economic competition between the cultural groupings.

The decreasing role of the colonial authorities in Belize's internal government since the 1950s, and especially since internal autonomy was granted in 1964, has seen greater national integration and increased competition amongst the Creoles and the Mestizos for the economic benefits of independence.

According to various histories of Belize, the Creoles do tend to regard themselves as the founding fathers of the country and as

the only real Belizeans. Since the Creoles lived in the capital they filled the local jobs in the colonial administration and benefited from the better provisions for education in Belize City. Right up until the 1950s the rest of the country outside of Belize City was very cut off from the life in the capital and the Creoles monopolised employment in the civil service, in the banks and in schools.

However many Mestizos accumulated capital producing sugar-cane and some moved to Belize City to set up in business. Mestizos have benefited from improved rural education although they still do not set up in business. Mestizos have benefited from improved rural education although they still do not value it as much as the Creoles, probably because they build their success with business, whereas the Creole seeks a professional financial base.

EW "Y ahorita cuál grupo está más próspero?

A Bueno, es un punto muy bueno. Yo creo que el, la raza más próspera es el latino que eso incluye entonces Mestizo-Maya, porque nosotros controlamos, ¿comprende Ud.? los negocios. Los negocios, por ejemplo como tiendas, cantinas - en donde Ud Vaya predomina el mestizaje - en el Cayo mismo. Hay unos africanos que se están metiendo aquí allá, pero muy muy limitado."

L "So you see Belize is ... an agricultural country and it doesn't matter who looks at the idea as a false idea or not, but the people who have, really have kept this country for the past 20 years or more are the Maya Indians, because the Maya Indians

have been agricultural people, and Belize being an agricultural country is...a lot of the mahogany, the chicle people, the saw-mill and the lumber business are mostly owned by the Spanish people. Most of the Creole prefer to sit in Belize City as they seem to get easier jobs there, but the, what you call the Spanish people, they don't care working in forest, to work the land. That's if you really take a look at the country as it is you will find Corozal and Orange Walk are the most, two of the most advanced Districts - well most of it came from the ground and the soil. Before cane we had corn, we had rice, we had beans."

There is no doubt that the greater Mestizo involvement in education has led to demands for schools teaching literacy in Spanish, bilingual education and even Spanish as the sole language of instruction in schools. Since the late 1950s the P.U.P. has had a distinct Latin bias and its electoral support comes from the rural areas. Thus Mestizos won elective posts and they in turn have influenced the allocation of administrative posts in favour of their own cultural group.

A "en general los funcionarios de gobierno son de raza africana, es decir criollos. Si Ud. va al departamento, por ejemplo de policía, es de raza negra, es de raza africana. Si Ud. va a la aduana lo mismo. Si Ud. va al departamento de donde Ud. vaya en particular, todos los jefes son de raza africana, ¿por qué? Por que el africano tuvo la ventaja de tener colegios y escuelas en la ciudad de Belize, cuando nosotros así en los distritos no tuvimos esa oportunidad, por que en ese entonces no había caminos, no había carreteras. Se viajaba solamente por barco a la



ciudad de Belize. Así es que el inglés fue el que dió más auge a la gente de raza africana y debido a eso ellos siempre predominan. Y agarramos abogados, agarramos doctores, en general la mayoría son de raza africana. Sólo estos últimos 15 años durante el período de este gobierno que tenemos todavía en vigencia, fue, este, empezó a cambiar. Eso que tenemos doctores Mayas, latinos, unos abogados - unos cuantos, muy mínimo y ciertos funcionarios del gobierno - también el mínimo en ciertas posiciones de importancia. Pero la predominancia está en todo rango de gobierno, en administración social general, es controlado por la raza africana."

Economic opportunities are extremely limited in Belize and the Creoles have felt increasingly threatened by the Mestizo challenge. Many Creoles are now employed by Mestizos and there are more Mestizo politicians and civil servants and teachers. In 1979 Rubinstein (19) reports that in his survey only 3% of Corozal Town teachers indicated they had a certain command of Spanish and only 2% said they used Spanish in the classroom. This is not the impression I received - although it was definitely partial, all the teachers I spoke to could speak Spanish. All the teachers involved in teaching small children said Spanish had to be used in class.

Brockmann (7) describes the changes economic development has brought to the north of Belize in the past 2 - 3 decades:

"Improved communication, economy, and education in the north have led to a great increase in interethnic contact. Use of the Mayan



language has dwindled in favour of Spanish. Creoles are no longer predominant in district level government posts and the British are only present in a small number of specialised technical capacities, primarily in the sugar industry. With the exception of the police, Mestizos are found in Orange Walk government and teaching posts in proportion to their numbers in the Town population. Nationally, though, Creoles dominate the government offices.'

The Country Environment Profile drawn up by Robert Nicolait & Assocs.(9) interprets the fact that the population in Belmopan is 57% Creole as an indication of their political importance. The U.D.P. victory of December 1984 could well be partially a defensive reaction to the P.U.P.'s attack at Creole hegemony. Le Page pointed out the Creoles' uneasiness in 1975:

'Until recently the Creoles felt fairly secure in their entrenched political and cultural position in Belize: Today they are beginning to feel threatened. They see 'Spanish' Belizeans beginning to overtake them educationally and economically, and they find that a government which is committed to a multiracial, multilingual ideal for 'Belize' seems to pay more attention to the Spanish population's needs than to theirs. The police force, the teaching profession, the civil service are all still predominantly Creole, but every year less and less so.' (20).

R said Creoles emigrate to the U.S. because:

"están desilusionados. Es que ahora también nosotros agarramos

la oportunidad de ir a escuelas, colegios de acá. Ahora nosotros también estamos superando en el campo educacional."

When I asked how the Mestizos earned their living, R expressed the following criticisms of the Creoles:

"Yo creo que más en el económico porque ven el educacional - ya comprende que esto estaba controlado por criollos en Belice, ciudad de Belice - es la capital, y eran ellos que conseguían todas las oportunidades. Así es ahora que el gobierno, el Partido del Pueblo ha empezado a entender esta o nunca podía haber tenido este puesto hace unos diez años. Imposible. Eran puros criollos y, bueno, primero eran británicos, ¿no? Pero después de ellos vinieron los criollos, ¿no? Pero ¿el Mestizo? ¿El Maya? ¿Qué pasa? Hoy tenemos médicos, doctores de medicina que son de las áreas rurales. Parece que la dirección que está tomando ahora es que las áreas rurales han producido más mentes y ¿quién sabe? Yo creo que esto es una lucha para sobrevivir, para desarrollar para el progreso.

EW Entonces, ¿económicamente los Mestizos van bien? ¿Mejor que los criollos? Y ellos sí van a conseguir los puestos del gobierno, ¿no? finalmente.

R Pero los criollos, ellos tenían todo. Por eso a veces cuando se dice que hay un papel en la mano que dice de que los Mayas tienen todo, no es verdad. El Maya lo tiene por que lo ha trabajado - y el Mestizo. Sí han trabajado, sí andaban para trabajar mientras el sol estaba caliente y .... después consiguieron desarrollar un capital y con el capital compraron

sus camiones y empezaron a mecanizar, ¿no?

EW Entonces, ¿los criollos van perdiendo empleo y no van creando otros nuevos?

R No, no. Y eso es el problema de ellos y muchos de ellos empiezan a criticar el gobierno - y que no sirve, y que no hay oportunidad y están yendo en gran número a los Estados Unidos y eso también está dañando porque si están yendo en gran números a Estados Unidos quiere decir que entonces decrementa su población y nosotros quedamos - quitaron."

He continued that the P.U.P. saw Belize's future in agriculture and felt the economy would never develop whilst the population was so small and the Creoles continued to prefer an urban life to a rural one.

Grant (4) counters the Mestizos' complaints against the Creoles for exercising cultural and social discrimination with the information that Mestizos were knowingly not prepared for competing on the employment market in Belize because St John's College did not enter their students for Overseas Cambridge Examinations until the 1930s. Instead the students were encouraged to go and study in Catholic institutions in the U.S. and many did not return to Belize because of the lack of opportunities there. Also many Mestizos had easy access to employment in family businesses and commercial banks and were not in competition with the Creoles for professional or civil service occupations as they did not attribute the status to them that

Creoles did.

## 2.6. Manifestations of prejudice.

Several Belizeans in Corozal mentioned how lazy they thought the Belize City Creoles were. They said there might well be no employment opportunities in Belize City but there were plenty in the fields - to the extent migrant workers from Mexico were hired to cut cane because labour was so short.

R "No quiero ser un poco racista, ¿verdad? Pero si Belice ha progresado, ha progresado por el Mestizo, por que el criollo no quiere salir de la ciudad de Belice. El quiere trabajo de oficina o si no se sienta allá - no sé si había visto afuera capturar estos sentados allá en barrios en la ciudad, desempleados. Y cuando acá hay empleo de corta caña. Cortar caña es mucho, ¿ves? Un trabajo salvaje. Tal vez ellos piensan que regresan a la esclavitud de hace siglos y ¿qué pasa? Los mexicanos cruzan a cortar cañas. Es algo contradictorio, ¿verdad? hablando de desempleo en Belice y tenemos que importar desde México y desde Guatemala para cortar caña."

Rather too much is implied about the Creoles having been slaves in <sup>the</sup> past. It is suggested that the Creoles have developed a submissive attitude and collaborated with their colonial master for their own benefit and in betrayal of other Belizeans, unlike the Maya who bravely resisted all oppressors and seeing they would be overpowered took refuge in the jungle. The following is a description of the Creoles by the Chief Education Officer (22):

'Como este grupo es mayoritario, se vinculó desde el inicio al grupo gobernante colonialista..tienen..una lealtad no disimulada a las tradiciones y costumbres británicas. Esta simpatía hacia el país colonizador se puede explicar como éxito de un proceso de asimilación total.'

EW "Y por qué no se interesa en los negocios y en la agricultura?

A Pues yo creo que es posiblemente debido al desarrollo histórico del afro-paisano, porque, por ejemplo, el desarrollo, el africano, como le trajeron de esclavo de Jamaica, de Barbados, de las islas por los ingleses, ellos se dedicaron más a cortar caoba, a cortar palo tinto y con eso entonces ellos aborrecieron la tierra. Así es que cuando fueron liberados por la emancipación de la esclavitud, ellos no querían ver nada el monte, nada con el bosque. Querían concentrarse más en el pueblo, vivir dependientes, por ejemplo nada más de las personas que los emplean por que se creían seguros para trabajar solas. Esa psicología se les, pues, se les impuso y desde ese entonces es muy raro ahorita el de raza africana, origen africana que se crea, por ejemplo, luchando como luchamos nosotros. No tenemos miedo por ir agarrar un machete, o ir trabajar duro en el campo. Sembramos nuestras milpas y todo, pero él no le gusta eso."

Yet Creoles are portrayed as having been aggressive and ruthless in their treatment of other cultural groups. SM complained that Belize City Creoles were very prejudiced against Mestizos and constantly discriminated against them. When she had been in the Sixth Form at St John's College the Creoles looked down on the

Mestizos. However a former Creole pupil complained that the Mestizo pupils were always the ones who won scholarships to go and study abroad and the best jobs at home - some because they were relatives of the former Prime Minister.

Despite their complaints the Mestizos in Belize are no longer as marginalised as they were in 1968 when Waddell (10) wrote the following:

'The 'Spanish' rather resent the dominance of 'Creole' Belize, and in the north they regard themselves as Mexican rather than British Honduran. English learned at school is soon discarded, and at times some make a virtue of failing to understand English. Inter-marriage between 'Creole' and 'Spaniard' is rare. The 'Spaniards' are a self-conscious, concentrated, vocal group in a very definite minority position in the affairs of the country, with which they do not appear satisfied.'

One distinctive advantage of the Maya-Mestizos is that they can claim a 'white' identity that is denied to the Creoles. This signifies that the Mestizo has access to employment opportunities that the black does not - for example in the U.S.

Brockmann (7) observes:

'Mestizo expressions of superiority over Creoles are more openly made than Creole statements of their primacy. Since most Mestizos are lighter in skin colour than Creoles. Creole expressions of superiority are equivocal. The Mestizos base their superiority on their Spanish cultural heritage and light



skin colour'

Belizean women in Corozal at least, made constant references to skin colour distinguishing between lighter and darker skins and straight and knotted hair. On the face of it these references were usually descriptive and did not even imply an aesthetic evaluation of a person. P had commented that her mother had said a light skin colour was a status symbol in Corozal in the past. Corozal appears to have had a very conservative social stratification in the past with direct descendents of Spanish colonialists at the top.

A Belize City Creole told me that children call Creoles 'rice and beans', Mestizos 'corn' and Garífuna 'fish'. These nicknames are obviously related to racial pigmentation and/or staple diet.

In Creole whites are referred to as 'bakra' because their backs get raw in the sun. Mestizos are called 'yellow-belly pania'. 'Yellow belly' is in reference again to the fact Mestizos eat maize and 'pania' comes from 'Spain'. This term is probably the reason why the Mestizos dislike being called 'Spanish' as has been the convention in Belize and still is for most people. Proud Mestizos prefer the term 'Mestizo'. L commented that the Creole have stopped calling Mestizos 'yellow-belly Spanish' as they have taken to eating tortillas themselves now they are produced mechanically in tortillerías.

EW "Y éste, ¿cómo se llaman todas las personas que hablan las diferentes lenguas en Belice, por ejemplo los que hablan español se llaman españoles o hay otros nombres?



R No,no - aquí no se llaman españoles.

EW ¿Cómo se llaman?

R Mestizos

EW Mestizos. Pero los criollos a veces dicen españoles? No?

R No,no. Los criollos usaban en un modo derogatorio, ¿no?... Por ejemplo un Mestizo si iba a la ciudad de Belice allí la llamaban 'pania'. La palabra 'pania', pero que viene de 'España', 'español'. Pero ellos lo usaban como un modo de insulto, de ofensa, ¿no? lo de 'pania'."

Two other respondents - A and P - told me specifically that the correct term to use was 'Mestizo'. However this term is certainly not used by everyone and 'Spanish' seemed to be quite usual and is used in all the material available in Belize. Koenig (13) found the opposite case - that people used the term 'Spanish' not 'Mestizo'. It is worth noting here that AW when attempting to qualify his identity forgot 'Mestizo', so it would appear to be an unfamiliar term because it is a relative innovation. No doubt it owes its currency to the strong Mexican influence in Corozal.

AW "Cómo no me acuerdo de este término que se está usando hoy día - una mezcla entre europeo e indio.

EW ¿Mestizo?

AW Mestizo, ¿no?

EW A mí mucha gente me dijo que en Belice no usan la palabra 'Mestizo' tanto como 'español'.

AW No, no lo usan. Exactamente. Eso es lo que te iba a decir. Por medio de mis estudios o por lo que he leído, realizo que, lo que soy, ¿no? Y no diría yo que soy español, tampoco que soy indio.

Mestizos refer to Creoles as Creoles, criollos, coloureds, gente de color, gente negra, negros, morenos and africanos. Afro was used and even criollito and negrito. Mulatto was a term used on one occasion.

It must be noted that the Creole culture enjoys a covert prestige amongst the young and this is hardly surprising as the American cultural influence means young black people in Belize identify with the young blacks of the U.S.A. As we shall see Belizean emigration to the States affects every family to a greater or lesser extent and most Belizeans at least visit the States in their life-time. If they do not actually work there illegally at least for a while. Also since the introduction of dishes by certain individuals to receive satellite signals, American T.V. is Belize's main entertainment.

## 2.7. The establishment of a national identity.

The former Prime Minister was clearly aware of the centrifugal socio-cultural forces in Belizean society because he asked Gregg (12) not to write about Creoles and Mestizos or Caribs, but rather of Belizeans. The P.U.P.'s response to cultural diversity

officially has been to embrace this plurality. However there is still unresolved disagreement over the direction in which the P.U.P. chose to develop Belizean national identity. The opposition felt the name of Belize given to the country in 1973 was too Latin and the flag was reputed to be an imitation of the Guatemalan one (the colours are similar). The name 'Belize' was believed by the opposition to come from 'Wallace' - the Scottish pirate who was operating from the Belize River in the early seventeenth century. The P.U.P. however proffered origins which were Mayan or Spanish or even French. The Creoles can hardly be expected to rally to a glorification of the ancient Maya civilisation of Central America.

The idea of calling oneself 'Belizean' was not welcomed by the Mestizos in the north who associated the term with Belize City Creoles for whom they had certain dislikes (W).

The celebration of the Battle of St George's Cay by the Belize City Creoles was seen as offensive to the Mestizos as it rejoiced in the defeat of the Spanish. Also it is regarded as a relic of the social structure under slavery and colonialism. Some even claim the battle was nothing but a myth (MR). In 1961 the government changed the name of the September 10 celebration to 'National Day'. However Pan American Day ( 12 October) continued to be celebrated in the north and Garífuna settlement Day in the south. Finally since 1981 th P.U.P. tried to overshadow September 10 festivities with the celebration of independence on September 21.

The construction and location of Belmopan which became the new capital in 1972 was also a bone of contention. It was built after Hurricane Hattie destroyed Belize City in 1961. The main aim was to build a capital out of reach of the havoc that a hurricane could wreak. From its location it is clearly also intended to open up the interior and promote agricultural development, in line with P.U.P. policy. The Creoles feel that government under the P.U.P. has thus freed itself from the influence of the Creole former capital. Bad roads make inland Belmopan seem far removed from the more densely populated coastal regions.

It must also be mentioned here that Belizeans feel their culture lacks colour. Cooking is seen as an important cultural difference between the groups. J said that dances and old East Indian rituals had been forgotten and her women's association were intending to organize a 'culturama' in order to help check this process. There is no indigenous craftsmanship in Belize in comparison with Mexico and Guatemala, but Belize is distinctive because it is not just Amerindian or Mestizo like the rest of Latin America, but also African and British. Its history is more linked to that of the colonial Caribbean than to Central America as are its political and economic structure today.

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## Chapter 3

### Political alignments

#### 3.0 From the sociocultural to the political make-up of Belizean society

This chapter is the extension of the former chapter because the sociocultural alignments in Belizean society correlate to some extent with class and political alignments. We must analyse the socioeconomic and political importance of the different linguistic groupings in Belize in order to understand the sociolinguistic dynamic. We shall be considering the pressure which is applied over such questions as language choice in education in Chapter 5. But first let us complete our picture of the groupings and divisions which exist inside Belize.

##### 3.1. Political parties and race.

An immediate impression of politics in Belize would be that the alignments are racial. In Guyana for example the East Indians are represented politically by the People's Progressive Party and the blacks by the People's Congress and an American Ph.D. student (1) was struck by the racial connotations of politics in Belize:

'Within this diverse population, activist groups have appeared, calling on the people to 'think black', to throw out the white imperialists....In the northern sections of the country, conflicting behavioural patterns are often the rationale for

blacks being thrown out of dance halls or restaurants by the 'sedate Latin proprietors'. Racist jargon is heard so often and with so little friction, that most of it would be unconscious. More and more, it is heard that the opposition is made up of dark-skinned Creoles, who have an affinity toward the West Indies, while George Price, the current Premier, whose racial background is predominantly Indian and Spanish, is accused of trying to sell out the country to Guatemala. It is difficult to imagine that racial conflict will not grow as the people become more and more aware of their subtle racist tendencies'.

But this perception of the political situation in racial terms is superficial because, as we have already seen, the groupings in Belize are sociocultural ones and can embrace members of different racial origins.

EW Si los mestizos se ponen más fuertes y van a quedar hablando mucho más español, ¿qué va a pasar con los criollos? ¿Van a mantener su cultura o la van a perder?

RR Es allá uno de nuestros conflictos. Y es un conflicto político que estamos viendo ahorita.

EW ¿Y va a durar mucho?

RR Pues yo creo que sí, porque ahorita por ejemplo distinguen a los dos partidos políticos con eso, ¿verdad? de que el partido...mucho latino, mucho mestizo, de que el partido de la oposición es mucho más para los criollos, ¿no? Y, por ejemplo, cuando el gobierno de Belice decidió admitir, legalizar a los

refugiados salvadoreños, ellos estaban contra, así en juntas públicas, ¿no? diciendo pues que eso no puede ser, que si van a traer de el Salvador, pues admitan también de Haiti, pues, de color de Haiti. Fue una discusión, ¿no? En cierto modo el caso es, y demuestra claramente, de que la situación, ¿no? de que, el mestizo...es más cree que tiene sus intereses defendidos por el partido que está en poder, ¿no? Y ve a la oposición como un partido que va a empujar más la cultura criolla, ¿no? Aunque yo creo que ya no va a ser cierto, porque dentro de la estructura política de la oposición ya hay penetración de mestizo, con muchos líderes que ...ahorita el líder de la oposición es mestizo. Pero también hay que notar, ¿verdad? que aunque él es mestizo, siempre culturalmente él se siente como criollo'.

These sociocultural groupings, because they correspond with divisions based on urban and rural life-styles, expectations and values, consequently tend to correlate with class and so political affiliations.

### 3.2. Urban and rural divisions.

The population living in the countryside is predominantly Maya-mestizo. There are a few Creole farmers in Belize District and Cayo and in Stann Creek and Toledo. In these two southern provinces there are also Garífuna and East Indian agriculturalists. The P.U.P.'s main support is from the rural areas and this vote certainly secured their win in all national elections up until December 1984.

RR ' ...y también es rural y urbano porque la mayoría de la gente

en las áreas urbanas son criollos - toda la ciudad de Belice, ¿comprende? Y lo puede ver con los resultados de las elecciones en los municipios en donde se les pierde el partido allá. Es como Paredes estaba diciendo ese día allá que el partido puede perder elecciones municipales, pero cuando son las elecciones nacionales, siempre gana el Partido por medio de que en las áreas rurales votan a favor del Partido. Entonces el P.U.P. tiene más respaldo en las áreas rurales.'.

The U.D.P. is an urban-oriented party because it is the middle-class Creole party and it is the Creoles who mostly live in town, especially Belize City. Since the 1950s when the districts became more interested in the national arena of economic and political activity, previously monopolised by Belize City, people from other racial and cultural backgrounds, have become increasingly Creolised. As we have mentioned already, the introduction of national elections in 1954 effectively involved the districts for the first time in the political structure and the competition for political power. This challenge to Belize City's political control was not hollow as the growth of the sugar industry gave an economic base to the push for a change in the geographical and cultural distribution of power. However whilst the P.U.P. agitated for power to be removed from Creole dominated Belize City, some Mestizos moved towards identifying with the status values of the traditional centre of commerce and government.

Weed (1) states that the main predecessor to the U.D.P. formed in

1974, the N.I.P.(National Independence Party) consistently polled more than 40% of the vote in national elections. In 1979 the U.D.P. won 46.8% of the vote and the P.U.P. 51.8%. The 'first past the post' voting system meant the P.U.P. won 18 seats in the House of Deputies and the U.D.P. only 5. The U.D.P. however has managed to win the elections to Town Boards for example in Belize City and Corozal Town but lost their control in subsequent elections because, according to the reports of some Belizeans, the P.U.P. government withdrew funds from opposition Town Boards. In March 1985, following the U.D.P. victory in the general elections of December, the U.D.P. retained Belize City, San Ignacio and Benque Viejo Town Boards and gained Corozal, Orange Walk and Punta Gorda Town Boards. Dangringa went to the P.U.P. because the opposition vote was split by the Christian Democratic Party which is led by the former leader of the U.D.P. - Dr. Theodore Aranda, who is a Garífuna.

### 3.3 The socioeconomic base of the parties.

The political parties' sociocultural alignment is also a socioeconomic one. Although the P.U.P. has its well-off middle-class cadres, its grass-roots support is from the peasant farmers and the poor Creoles in the cities.

The U.D.P. on the other hand is the voice of middle-class Belizeans, whose aspirations lead them to identify more with North American cultural, economic and political values as opposed to more radical Central American politics which focuses on the needs of the masses who live off the land, not an individual's

material status.

Tony Thorndike (2) of North Staffordshire Polytechnic studies the geopolitics of the Caribbean Basin and he has summed up the situation in Belize as follows:

'There is no doubt that Belizean parties broadly cater to ethnic groups. The P.U.P.'s fundamental orientation towards Central America has not unnaturally led it to endorse measures which appear to favour Mestizos. But its appeal to dispossessed Creoles has always been considerable; they have readily endorsed the P.U.P.'s accusation that Britain was responsible for their plight.

By contrast the opposition is largely dominated by conservative middle-class Creoles and ex-P.U.P. dissidents and expellees, many of whom are Mestizo. Urban areas with their various tensions have often provided opposition groups with their main support and Belize was no exception.'

#### 3.4. The People's United Party (P.U.P.).

Since its inception in 1950 the P.U.P. has been the 'people's party'. It developed out of the People's Committee which was the organized protest against the effects of the devaluation of the Belizean dollar in line with that of the pound sterling after the war. On this basis the P.U.P. was the party who represented the poorer classes as opposed to the well-off residents of the capital who supported colonialism because they depended on it for employment. Thus its anti-colonial stance brought it support

from a broad base which spanned the cultural groups. All the leaders at the outset were Creole except for Price.

However in 1956 there was a split in the P.U.P. leadership and Philip Goldson and Richardson left because of a dispute with Price over issues arising out of race and culture. The latter two Creole figures favoured a future for Belize where it would be linked with the Caribbean. Price wanted to pursue closer relations with Central America and he had the backing of the Latin elite in this endeavour. Goldson and Richardson were isolated from this camp because of cultural and religious differences and they did not enjoy the support of the Creole elite as they sought independence from the U.K. Creoles still do form part of the P.U.P. and it must not be forgotten that its strength came from its unyielding effort to achieve independence and many Creoles would have identified with this. It is significant that the P.U.P. lost control of the government after this milestone had been passed.

In the history books constant reference is made to Belizean unity having been maintained because of national resistance to the Guatemalan claim to Belize. Yet the party which was regularly returned to the polls during the whole period up to independence was the P.U.P. which shared a distinct desire to incorporate Belize into the Central American arena. This desire was frustrated by the equally distinct desire not to be associated with authoritarian, if not dictatorial, Central American regimes and chronic social unrest and political instability.



It was Price who encouraged talks with the Guatemalans in the 1950s. It was a clearly provocative action in the face of the colonial authorities but it proved to be a miscalculated one with regard to the ammunition it gave to the opposition. It must be taken into account that the radical Arbeniz regime was in power from 1951 - 54 before it was deposed by a U.S. backed coup and that Guatemalan claims to Belize had not been reiterated for a time at that stage.

'Mr Price's party began to cultivate very assiduously the Spanish-speakers in the colony, and to look in the direction of Guatemala for support. There was indeed a period when it was fashionable among the P.U.P. to speak of British Honduras's 'continental destiny' and of a formal link with Guatemala, and the name for the colony to take after independence was designated as Belice - in its Spanish form..In the early 1960s however, following a change of government in Guatemala, Mr. Price and his government became alarmed by what appeared to be Guatemalan designs to annex Belize as soon as it became independent. The earlier overtures were hastily retracted, and today the instrument of independence is still not signed because Mr. Price wished Great Britain to give a pledge to defend Belize against Guatemala indefinitely, while the British government wishes to set a time limit to this commitment.'(3)

George Price continued to cultivate ever closer relations with Central American countries whilst he was in power. Whilst the countries had regimes not dissimilar to the military

dictatorships and authoritarian governments of Guatemala, Mr Price found it difficult to obtain their recognition of Belize's aim to become a sovereign nation. However a certain radicalisation in the region gave the Belizean government the support it needed to initiate moves in the U.N. and other international organisations to apply pressure for Belizean independence and the rejection of Guatemala's claim.

The opposition had always feared a sell-out to Guatemala on George Price's part and these fears are not totally unfounded judging by the conditions he was prepared to consider in order to obtain independence. The conditions which would have been imposed by a number of proposals which sought to resolve the Guatemalan claim would have made this covert independence meaningless.

Before Belize acceded to independence in September 1981, there had been tripartite negotiations in London with the aim of achieving a settlement over the Guatemalan claim in order to secure independence. Independence finally went ahead without ratification of the London Accord of March 1981. The U.K. simply agreed to keep British troops in Belize for an 'appropriate period'. The reaction to the news of the Accord in Belize was extremely hostile. There were U.D.P. rallies accompanied by riots and arson in Belize City, Dangringa and Orange Walk. Government and P.U.P. buildings were burnt to the ground and the property of prominent P.U.P. supporters was attacked. Four people died and many were wounded. The Belize Action Movement prepared to physically defend the African peoples of Belize and

the Anti-Communist Society joined in the uproar too. The Public Service Union called an independent strike. The British government declared a state of emergency.

Yet despite the passions the Guatemalan issue can arouse, George Price was not usurped despite his preference for Central America rather than the Caribbean. People remark on his charisma - his success could have been the attraction he held for all those who did not share the status or the values of the urban Creoles. People from outside Belize City appreciated the fact he could speak Spanish and Maya as well as English.

RR "El problema es de que muchos lo ven de que mientras esté el Primer Ministro ahorita pues, tal vez puede tener a los dos grupos satisfechos, ¿no? Pero ya desapareciendo el Primer Ministro va estar muchos problemas.

EW ¿Y ya ha habido peleas entre los españoles y los criollos?

RR Pues no, casi no. Yo creo que ahí viene un poco de política, ¿verdad? de que ha pasado de que nuestro país ha estado bajo el gobierno, ¿verdad? y de uno, yo creo que es mal y bueno, es una persona, de una vez, del Primer Ministro y no podemos negar que él ha sido una persona de que ha dado este equilibrio, ¿no? de mantener la paz por ejemplo. ¿Va estar en Belmopan? El maya está contento en esta ciudad estructura de como un templo maya y todo, ¿no? aunque grita también el criollo. Dice que - pero esta ciudad es maya, ¿no? Hay conflictos verbales. No hay nada que... Pero puede surgir un conflicto. Sí puede. Yo creo que, yo

a mi parecer, yo creo que sí va a surgir, porque ya vienen más muchachos ya preparados y ellos están clamando sus derechos ahora - como pidiendo más atención.

It must also be noted that the mestizos in the North are not particularly distressed by Guatemala's invasion threats because Mexico has indicated that in that eventuality it would claim sovereignty over the northern districts of Belize and annex them.

RR "En la disputa en lo guatemalteca sobre Belice, México siempre ha dicho que en caso de algo peor entonces tomaría esta parte y entonces la gente de aquí no diría nada - ya somos bastante mexicanos!"

### 3.5. The United Democratic Party (U.D.P.).

The U.D.P. was never able to offer an alternative to the P.U.P.'s resolve to gain independence. It proposed to delay independence for another 10 years and so it may have lost the 1979 elections because it was felt to be in favour of British colonialism.

The results of the 1979 elections were close and now independence has been attained Belize has entered into a new phase where the problems affecting the country are considered from an internal perspective. Now Belize is no longer under the direct control of the colonial power, people do not point to a foreign source of blame but have apparently cured their frustrations by bringing in a change of government.

Thorndike (2) reports that on its formation from various opposition parties and groups in 1974, the U.D.P. aimed to

increase its vote by emphasizing issues like unemployment, inflation, P.U.P. corruption and 'communism'.

A very interesting comment was made by B in respect of the U.D.P.'s ability to broaden its base:

"The U.D.P. leader..I don't recognise him to be a leader, as a Premier, because he's a coloured man and in coloured men - you saw what happened to Jesse Jackson in the States - they trust you, but they don't want you for a leader. And the same coloured people don't want a coloured man for a leader because some of them lord it. When they get up there, they lord it over..So I'm not a politician, but this is the way I see it that Mr George Price is a Spanish leader. Now the U.D.P. leader is Mr Esquivel - now he is a pale-skinned guy, so there ought to be a change because they got a leader now."

In the summer of 1984 most of the people questioned in Corozal were very concerned about the lack of economic development in Belize. There were frequent complaints of corruption whereby P.U.P. officials were abusing their power to line their pockets and patronize the members of their families.

Political campaigning in Belize is not subtle. The P.U.P.'s attempts to isolate Guatemala and fend off its claim involved wooing Panama under Torrijos, post-revolutionary Cuba and post-Gairy Grenada. The U.D.P. has levelled accusations of communism against the P.U.P. for this and indeed the connections were disapproved of by the right-wing of the P.U.P. itself. However

there are no grounds whatsoever to substantiate a Marxist tendency in the P.U.P. The economic policies are firmly based on private enterprise and attracting U.S., Commonwealth and E.E.C. investment. Belizean political parties do not express their differences in terms of class.

Since the P.U.P. defeat in December 1984 the party has split. Former P.U.P. right-wingers have founded the Belize Popular Party which won the Town Board elections in San Pedro, Ambergris Caye. This party describes itself as anti-communist and in favour of free enterprise. It is significant that its power base is San Pedro which is currently prospering on American tourism and fishing.

The Central American Information Service's August 1985 Belize Briefing (4) reported that the Belizean newspaper Amandala had suggested that Belizean politics is fragmenting into competition between rural, locally based caudillos. This is a very real threat in an economic recession as local economic conditions vary so much in Belize, as we shall see in Chapter 6. The economic fortunes of any particular region could create protests and claims to power linked with racial, cultural and linguistic factors which tend to correlate with the regions too.

### 3.6. The tensions exacerbated by the Central American refugees

Sociocultural tension has been highlighted by another post-independence issue - namely, the arrival in Belize of thousands of Central American refugees. Only those Central Americans who



have been entering Belize since 1979 are classed as refugees. The government designated a site 12 miles from Belmopan as a refugee village - 'The Valley of Peace'. Elizabeth Chanona of the Refugee Office reported that three-quarters of the people who were in the Valley of Peace were from El Salvador, the rest were from Guatemala. Guatemalans were not accorded assistance - a consequence of the dispute over Belizean sovereignty. Other refugees were entitled to immediate aid in the form of food supplies for 3 months. However the intention with a view to the long-term was to supply land and seed for the refugees to provide for themselves - hence the creation of the Valley of Peace Project. The government was facing difficulties realising its plans for refugees in 1984.

Otherwise the refugees had settled where work was to be found - cane-cutting in the north, on the citrus plantations along the Hummingbird Highway and on banana plantations in Punta Gorda.

In order to know how many aliens there were in Belize and to concede refugee status to those who were fleeing from their homes because of fear and persecution, the P.U.P. government granted an amnesty from 2 May to 31 July, 1984. Those who were refugees were to be given the right to stay in Belize until the situation changed in their home country and the right to apply for citizenship if they could prove their economic situation was viable after 5 years in Belize.

The reactions to the Central American refugees' presence should be considered in the context of the Creoles' fear of losing their



demographic predominance and their cultural integrity, be it through the invasion of Guatemala, the emigration of Creoles to the U.S. or to an influx of Central American refugees. When initial estimates of the refugees cited figures of 4 - 7,000 the U.D.P. accused the P.U.P. of a deliberate 'latinization' policy and of registering the refugees for the 1984 elections.

As early as 1971 Evan Hyde had written in 'North Amerikkkan Blues' (5):

'No one really trusts Price in Belize City. Those in the P.U.P. love him and the rest hate him but no one trusts him.

Yes, we have a strange and way out leader.

It's like some of these people getting guayabera and khaki pants obeh in the tortilla they eating. Or maybe it's the flood of Mennonites, Guatemalans, Mexicans and Americans we been getting.

We becoming strangers in our own home-town.'

The P.U.P. response to Creole hostility to the Central American refugees in the early 80s was to arrange for Haitians who had fled to the U.S. to settle in Belize in order 'to restore the racial balance' (2). These arrangements fell through. However in the summer of 1984 I was amazed to hear a teacher expressing the fear of Haitians being admitted to Belize because of the above average incidence of Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (A.I.D.S.) amongst the Haitian population.

In April 1985 it was claimed that there were a total of 46,780

foreign nationals in Belize, of which 10,853 were Guatemalans and 7,859 were Salvadoreans. These were in fact grossly inflated figures that the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Curl Thompson, had arrived at by adding up refugee figures for every year since 1978. It is interesting that Leland Ross White (6) found that in the middle of the nineteenth century the refugees were feared for their 'barbarism' - many fires being attributed to Santa Cruz Maya 'subversives'.

The C.A.I.S June Belize Briefing reported that Curl Thompson, announced a task force 'to look at the whole process of alien immigration into Belize', linking illegal immigration and labour for the ganja (marijuana) trade. He also claimed that immigrants featured 'very prominently' in the rising statistics of violent crime.'

On 1 August 1985 'The Guardian' reported that 8,000 illegal immigrants were involved in the drug industry in Belize.

Many Belizeans understood why refugees might have taken to growing marijuana and to being employees of the drug mafia as they are desperate and also accustomed to violence. Salvadorean women apparently resorted to prostitution. These were very much the stereotype images of Central American refugees about which jokes were made.

In reference to the bank robbery which occurred in Corozal Town in August, 1984 M said:

"I say they wouldn't be our people. They would not risk their

lives like that. No, I think the Salvadoreans or the Guatemalans would do something like that. You know why? Because for them life or death doesn't mean that much you know. They are accustomed to violence you know. If they are killed for nothing then they might as well do something you know and they are desperate. So I think it's not our people.'

M was not condemning the refugees for their involvement in criminal activities when she said this - taken in its whole context she would be echoing W's observation:

W "You know what we think. I was speaking to my husband the other day when I was thinking that Belizeans - on the whole the people who deal with this marijuana it's Belizeans. And what they do is take advantage of the refugee because the refugee wants money to maintain his family and they are so used to this kind of life that they are going to have to be running away with killing and so on, that they don't mind giving up their life for a cost. So what happens that the Belizean threatens them and they say alright you are going to get part of this, or you get paid, but if you're caught you are alone in these things - I don't want to be mentioned and I think the refugees accept this."

Also there was a suspicion that some Central Americans were not real refugees but wealthy ones who were taking advantage of refugee status to buy Belizean land. It was also resented by some that there was a programme to teach them English as then they would leave the rural areas and compete for jobs. Some women said the women from El Salvador were fairer so they were

employed in banks, for example, in preference to darker Belizeans:

EW "There's been quite a few refugees come over from Guatemala hasn't there?

B Now that is what is happening with us. They claim that the United Nations, I think, sent them along. They cross here and you have Belizeans help some people together. They send them from here. They send them abroad, because you know we are too small a country for these people to be coming in and they are slick, you know, they're slick...You know it's funny about it Miss, you are going to run? You're a refugee, you're going to run?...These people bring their children's desks, these children bring their tools to work and radios and so on. You are a refugee, Miss, you are running...You don't think so? They are not refugees."

### 3.7 References

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## Chapter 4

### Language Needs in Belize

#### 4.0.1. Language statistics.

According to the 1980 census, in Belize preferred language usage for the population was 50.6% English, or rather Creole, and 31.6% Spanish (Maya 6.4%; Garífuna 6%; German 3.3 %). Robert Nicolait & Associates Ltd (5) state that:

' an impressive 62% of the population speak 2 languages, while 16% are trilingual and 38% speak only one language.'

However I do not know where these latter figures came from as the 1980 census did not cover bilingualism - and I understand no other one has been done either.

#### 4.0.0. A Belizean's language environment.

When a Belizean is born she will enter a family with a more or less established socio-cultural and linguistic identity. The groups which have a more established identity are Belize City Creoles, the Mestizos of the North, especially of Corozal Town, the Garífuna, the Ket'chi and Mopan Maya and possibly the Chinese. A child born into these groups will initially learn the language of that particular group. In reference to the above groups the language would be Creole, Spanish, Garífuna, Ket'chi and Mopan Maya and Chinese respectively. Benito Quan (1) in an article on the Chinese community in Belize says:

'Because most Chinese elders are fully engaged in commerce, they spend little time conversing with their children. As a result, the children scarcely speak Chinese, although they may be able to understand what their parents say. Gradually it appears that the Chinese language here in Belize is going to die out.'

No doubt this prophesy is true but two Chinese families I observed in Corozal Town spoke Chinese amongst themselves.

The families with a less clear-cut identity are the Yucatecan Maya of the North who have been increasingly adopting Spanish and abandoning Maya so as to claim a higher status through a mestizo identity. This process is common to the whole of Latin America where there were and still are indigenous groups which survived the initial ravages of the conquest years and the colonies.

Belize is exceptional in having a majority of black Creole-speakers in its population and a process is occurring whereby the racially and culturally demarcated groups of the early colony have mixed to a certain extent and today younger Belizeans appear to be finally acknowledging their 'mixed' identity but are still not quite decided enough to state it is a Creole one.

'It seems ..for the parents' generation ethnic choice had to coincide more or less with language choice. Members of the younger generation however seemed to be able to establish their ethnic identity separately from their language identity. This had the advantage of allowing respect for the parents and for their Spanish loyalty and to give voice to the social linguistic evolution towards Creole that would by now be difficult to deny.'



The 'mixed' identity seemed also to allow them to keep some Spanishness.... Young people who identified themselves as 'Mixed' might be those who did not want to make a choice or who preferred to avoid one . We must in any case remember that 'Mixed' was more or less synonymous with 'Creole' for many informants'(2)

Le Page suggests the 'mixed' and 'Creole' labels are in fact equivalent. Another example is that in 1978 he found that responses to his questions concerning identity were significantly different from in 1970:

'More generally there was less attempt to be very specific about their ethnic 'descent' by using complex names (like Indian Spanish Mixed or Mixed Spanish Creole) - in fact none of them did this in 1978 and the names most chosen were either plain 'Creole' or a kind of neutral 'Mixed'..In addition to the category 'Mixed' the category 'Belizean' now appeared. We have established how in 1978 'Belizean' denoted citizenship of the state of Belize but we must now stress the very strong connotation it had with the use of Creole. In most of the cases where Belizean identity was referred to, Creole was mentioned as 'the Belizean language'(3)

However certain reservations must be made. Le Page assesses the two tags to be equivalent because people with a 'mixed' identity speak Creole. However in Cayo where his team's research took place there might be the tendency, which I found in Corozal Town to equate 'Creole' with the city and particularly Belize City

Creoles. J said Belize City Creoles were too 'flashy' and 'chic'. She also mentioned that people outside of Belize City would not be speaking 'Creole' but 'Broken English'.

People who are 'mixed' do emphasise their Spanish ancestry. The way of life in rural areas has definite Hispanic features, as cultivation is seen to be a mestizo way of life and the diet is more dependent on maize. As Le Page puts it :

'A further study (Tabouret Keller 1976) supports these results: information given by the families on the pupils' grandparents' identity and place of birth showed that loyalty towards Spanish identity was stronger than towards any other, and also that Spanish descent was overestimated: we recorded more Spanish grandmothers (or great-grandmothers) than any census of the beginning of the century allowed for!'(4)

J claimed her mother was 'Spanish' when her maternal grandmother was said to be Maya and Spanish and LM said her mother was Spanish and then specified later 'mixed Spanish'. There is no reason to doubt these grandmothers are Spanish-speaking as they come from Corozal District, but they could have been predominantly Maya in fact.

Full consideration will be given to the Creolization process in Chapter 5. Here the point must be made that although one refers to various groups in Belize such as the Creoles, the Mestizos and the Garífuna, there is a crucially important process of Creolization which might result in a distinctive Belizean national identity being formed if it is favoured by economic

conditions.

A rather special group in Belize are East Indians who have adopted the Creole language and the life style of the 'mixed' rural Belizean ( in the city they would be totally creolized) but still stand out and are still called 'hindus' because of their racial features. I also suspect they might speak a marked variety of Creole as a little girl - L M-said that in her family and in San Antonio, on the edge of Corozal Town, coolie is spoken as well as Creole. These were the same, she said, except for the accent.

Now a child born into a family of a mixed background could start life speaking Spanish or Creole. However these families are located where people of different racial and linguistic backgrounds are coming into contact and the lingua franca is Creole, and Creole has become the first language in the sense of functioning as the mother-tongue and as the language used spontaneously in the home and amongst neighbours and friends in everyday conversation. B in Corozal Town said:

'in P.G. you know, Toledo, and I feel in Belize, there is not a lot of Spanish to such an extent on account of the fact that, like in Belize City, there are a mixture of races and to get along with people you have to speak something, so they more tend to stick to the English or to the Creole'.

Because of Creole's function as a lingua franca, whatever a child's mother-tongue, she will pick up Creole from other

children and in the neighbourhood in her life outside the family.

Attendance at school is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 14 and the language of instruction is English. As we shall see below many Belizeans leave school speaking English but most do not and it would be unrealistic to expect that they did so given the fact that the schools deal with the needs arising from the children's complicated linguistic composition and environment only on a very ad hoc basis.

If a child does not pick up Spanish in her environment - and many Belizeans living in Belize City or in Dangringa and other Creole-, ~~Garifuna~~ and Maya-dominated villages in the south will not need to learn Spanish for everyday transactions - she may retain and develop the Spanish learnt at secondary school. However only those non-Spanish speakers who live in Spanish-speaking areas tend to do this as people from other areas would only find Spanish useful if their job required it.

Those members of the community who become teachers or traders may find it useful to pick up some Ket'chi or Mopan Maya or some Garífuna if they are in a lot of close contact with these people and on very friendly terms but on the whole they can expect the latter to speak English or Creole in contacts with outsiders.

As we can see from the outline of the language environment of a Belizean the unavoidable languages are Creole for 'street survival' - a term used by B- and above all English because it is the language of instruction in the schools and for many the only hope of achieving social mobility:

'like I tell my own father -in -law, because I think I was so ambitious, you know, ever since I was a child I saw that my father was very poor and he had to struggle. But I was gifted, right? I don't say that I am an 'A' student but I am 'B' about 'B', right? But then I aimed for education because I thought education would help me to be better you see.'

#### 4.1. The Belizean Education System

English is the language of instruction in Belizean schools as the whole education system is a legacy of colonial days. Belize is distancing itself from total dependence on the British system by adopting the new Caribbean Examinations Council examinations and phasing out Cambridge Board and London Board Overseas General Certificate of Education 'Ordinary' level examinations.

Traditionally education in Belize was provided by Roman Catholic, Anglican, Moravian, Methodist, Nazarene and Pentecostal Church of God missions. This suited a colonial government which until the 1930s was representative only of the forestry and merchant interests. As Ashcraft and Grant (6) point out, when the British imperial treasury took over the finances of British Honduras after the 1931 hurricane, 9% of the colony's budget was ear-marked for education in contrast to a maximum of only 3.3% in any one year before that time. A publication of the People's United Party (P.U.P.) government (7) is quick to point out that it increased expenditure in education to 17% of the national

budget in the 1970s.

Since 1966 education in the colony has come under the supervision of the Minister of Education, but in reality it is shared by the State and the Church. According to Ashcraft and Grant(6) the P.U.P. government failed to check the fragmentation and duplication produced by the multid denominational nature of the schools. They also believed the churches tend to cater for different cultural groups. See Table 3.

Table 3 (8)

Denomination	Primary schools (government & government- aided)	Attendance
Roman Catholic	113	22,242
Anglican	23	4,125
Methodist	22	3,263
Others	38	5,451
Totals	196	35,081

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (9) states that in 1980 there were 21 state and 180 grant-aided primary schools and 877 pupils in 15 private primary schools. The Government of Belize (8) quotes 5,522 secondary school pupils in 1982 and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (9) quotes 5 government and 17 grant-aided secondary schools. The government has been building more non-denominational secondary schools of late. Corozal Community College, Mopan Technical School in Benque Viejo and Orange Walk Technical High School have been built with money from the European Development Fund. Secondary schools were put under the supervision of District Education Officers in 1981 (according to R) although the Corozal District Education Officer said he only ever had time to go to Corozal Community College once a term.

One main consequence of the multidenominational nature of the schools has been the irrelevance of the curricula to the government's need to create a Belizean national identity and to develop the population's ability to contribute skills towards economic development. Instead the curricula have an overwhelmingly religious content and they focus on foreign cultures and values rather than nurturing a pride in a Belizean way of life. The connection of the education system with that of the colonial power caused a focus on British history and culture and the Jesuits and other American-based denominations have preferred to make the content of their curricula for British examinations as American as possible. Many of the staff and



usually the most responsible ones in these missionary schools are foreign. Nowadays the foreign influence comes from volunteers of the American Peace Corps or the British Voluntary Service Overseas. It is worth noting here that the total number of Peace Corps volunteers in Belize in 1985 was calculated at 200 (i.e. 1:140 Belizeans or 1/25 of Peace Corps involvement worldwide) (10).

Another consequence of the Churches' power is the waste of severely limited resources. Provision of schools is unnecessarily duplicated by the churches in a locality for the sake of their denominational exclusiveness and the lack of resources means that duplication reduces the possibility of generally improved facilities. The government has claimed it cannot afford to equalise the provision given by the different denominations - the Roman Catholic Church is more wealthy than the others - nor make up the difference between rural and urban education facilities. As Ashcraft and Grant (6) point out:

'Under the present grant-in-aid program the government spends more on secondary education than it would within a more centrally coordinated system. Under the present arrangement the government provides 50% of the cost of a project and in some cases lends the remaining portion. Given the denominational initiative and rivalry, the government is compelled to support financial duplications and over-lapping efforts'

Ashcraft and Grant (6) suspect that the reluctance to impose coordination over the Church schools is a result of the P.U.P.'s

Catholic bias. The former Alumni of St John's College (S.J.C.), the Jesuit high school in Belize, have been an influential group ever since the beginning of the Nationalist Movement in 1959. George Price, the former Prime Minister is one. Most of the primary schools in Belize are Roman Catholic and St John's College, run by Jesuits who come mainly from Missouri, is the most important high school in Belize. The Jesuits are able to obtain more money from the U.S. than the Protestants can from Great Britain and the West Indies and they enjoy greater local support as more Belizeans are Roman Catholic than of any other faith and also most wealthy people are Roman Catholic, according to Ashcraft and Grant (6). Also the government's contribution to a school matches that of the school so wealthy schools benefit more than the poorer ones with this doubling of their income. Many Creoles attend S.J.C. because it offers better facilities than any Protestant school and some have converted to Catholicism. However this influence is counterbalanced by the fact further education is mostly to be found in the University of the West Indies or U.S., U.K. and Canadian universities.

#### 4.2. English as the language of instruction in Belizean schools.

It is difficult to understand why on the whole most of the teachers spoken to were satisfied with the education system in Belize when the facts contradict its supposed adequacy:

"As I said, first we were under the colonial rule so we had to actually take English as a subject and the exams were all in English and it helped us a lot because we can boast that we have

the highest rate of literacy in all Central America because the education is free (B).

Very few children in Belize are actually selected to go to secondary school and this selection is obviously very dependent on language skills as English is the language of instruction.

11 to 12 year olds sit the Belize National Selection Examination (B.N.S.C.). Children scoring over 60% in this examination have the possibility of being selected for secondary education, but priority is given to children who have gained over 80%. They are examined in 5 areas: 1, Mathematics; 2, English; 3, Social Sciences; 4, Natural Sciences; 5, Learning Potential (Logic and Reasoning)(11).

I spoke with a 13 year old girl (RS) who had gained 65% in her B.N.S.C. and she chose to talk in Spanish as she said her English was not very good. She said she found it difficult talking in English but she did not acknowledge having any difficulty adjusting to English at primary school although she did not really understand the teacher at times. She was from a Spanish-speaking Maya-Mestizo family with a very rural way of life and her elder sister was studying in Guatemala. This appears to be a choice made by people who are happier speaking Spanish than English and clearly identify more with it.

Even if the child is offered a place the schools charge for tuition and for other expenses and the number of government scholarships do not compensate for the amount of children who are

unable to pay. According to the Government of Belize (7) in 1975 59.8% of the pupils who passed the B.N.S.C. went on to secondary education. Only 344 children out of 5210 received a scholarship.

"There was a boy who was so intelligent, right? But he didn't have anything to pay for it - his continuing education. It's true my father had to struggle to give it to me, right? But he had, as it was, if he wanted to. But I remember this classmate didn't have any money in order to pay"(P)

In 1964 - 65 less than 15% of the children who were enrolled in primary school went on to secondary school and again in 1980 only about 15% of the population had been through secondary school. See Table 4..

Table 4(12)

Percentage Adult Non-student Population\*1 by Highest Level Schooling Attained by Sex

Sex Population		None/ Primary Secondary University Other/ Total					
		Nsry.				N.S.*	
M	38,696	7.9	73.1	14.5	2.2	2.2	100.0
F	37,700	7.7	73.8	15.3	0.9	2.3	100.0

\*1Adult non-student population includes respondents 15 years and over who are no longer in school.

\*2 Not Stated.

Brockmann (13) gives some interesting information about the educational level achieved by males and females of different cultural groups. It reflects the value these groups are reputed to place on education and/or their possibilities of gaining access to secondary education. It also bears relation to sex as a variable in educational achievement:

'The mean educational level of all males in Orange Walk Town sixteen years of age and above is 7.3 years, with 6.3% having no formal education and with 15.1% having education beyond the primary level. Mestizo males have a mean educational level of 7.1 years, while Creoles have a mean of 8.0 years, Black Caribs have 7.7 years , and other ethnic categories have 7.6 years. Orange Walk Town women sixteen years of age and over have a mean educational level of 6.7 years with 0.6% having no formal education and 9.9% having education beyond the primary level. Mestizo women have a mean educational level of 6.3 years, while Creoles have a mean of 7.7 years. The other ethnic categories are represented by only one woman who completed high school. Comparable village figures, if available, would almost certainly be somewhat lower, due to the more recent founding of many village schools, less interest in female education, and less opportunities for post-primary training.'

The Corozal District Education Officer was concerned about the relatively few children from rural areas who managed to attend

secondary school. Adults and children alike were aware of the urban and rural dichotomy in the provision of education and many people said more trained teachers needed to be sent to the villages as the village children were the ones at the greatest disadvantage and the ones who had the greatest difficulties. R also mentioned the low pass-rate in Belize in the English Language G.C.E. 'O' level. According to Rubinstein (14) in 1971 only 61% passed 'O' level English G.C.E. with the Cambridge Board. As R.B. Le Page (15) points out the high failure rate in English G.C.E.s set by the University of London or Cambridge Overseas Examination Syndicate is common to the Caribbean. See Table 5.

Table 5 (15)

Achievement in London G.C.E. 'O' Level in Various Subjects, 1962

	Barbados		Guyana		Belize		Jamaica		Trinidad	
	Per-		Per-		Per-		Per-		Per-	
	cent		cent		cent		cent		cent	
Subject	Entry	Pass	Entry	Pass	Entry	Pass	Entry	Pass	Entry	Pass
English										
language	150	10.7	2483	19.6	24	21.0	661	19.4	1521	23.1
English										
litera-										
ture	91	24.2	1245	21.5	1	0	46	13.0	349	12.3
History	77	29.9	1167	34.4	3	0	41	4.9	145	23.4
Pure maths	45	8.9	898	24.6	5	60.0	135	7.4	659	17.3

Obviously no allowance is made in these examinations for the linguistic differences between West Indian accepted usage and English accepted usage. It would not be inappropriate for the Caribbean Examination Council (C.X.C.) to take these differences into account. The C.X.C. was established in 1972 to replace G.C.E.s with examinations which are more relevant to the needs



and the aspirations of the region. 14 countries participate in the Council (16).

In this context it is difficult to believe the claims to a literacy rate varying between 90 - 95%. Indeed the criterion for establishing a person's literacy is that they should simply be able to write their name (17).

EW ¿Hay problemas de analfabetismo entonces en los pueblos?

R Oh sí. Por eso nosotros estamos abriendo la escuela de adultos que tenemos divididos en tres partes - una es alfabetización."

More than 5% of the population do not ever go to school - or only to nursery school - and of those who do go only the tiniest minority of the well-to-do Europeans or lighter-skinned Creole population of Belize would speak English or Standard West Indian English as a mother-tongue. The people I spoke to accounted for illiteracy by the lack of schools in remote villages in the past and the fact that many villagers, for example cane farmers, did not wish to go.

The education system is failing many children and yet the teachers maintain the children have no real difficulty picking up English when they are so young and the former head-master of a secondary school in Corozal Town said that there were no English language problems in secondary schools:

AW "bueno en el nivel en que yo estaba enseñando;no?... cuando llegaron a la secundaria, ellos ya podían dominar el inglés, más,

reconozco, para entender el maestro. Ese problema existía más tal vez en la primaria, ¿no? Los maestros sí, allá, he entendido de que sí los maestros en la primaria hay veces tienen que empezar a enseñar a los niños en español para que aprendan inglés."

However the children must still need special English language support when their English is naturally Creolised and they might speak Spanish as their first language too.

Perhaps teachers simply do not accept the failures of the education system because they interpret it personally as an indication of their own failure. Also we might be simply imposing our own educational expectations and methods of measuring 'achievement' on people who perceive education in a different light. The value of G.C.E.s is challenged in Great Britain and possibly Belizean teachers are looking for a grasp of the language sufficient to serve the needs of the individual in Belize's linguistic environment. Looking at harsh reality most children never go on to secondary school and the only domains where English is absolutely *de rigueur* is in the police station or the courts - though these do appear to be the last enclaves of internal colonial linguistic behaviour as most government offices and banks have employees who can speak Spanish in Spanish-speaking areas. So not everybody need speak English fluently and those who do will occupy the limited number of places available in secondary schools anyway. Given that the provision of education is better in Belize City and other towns compared to the villages and that the language of instruction is English,

this attitude does of course serve to perpetuate the present structure of social stratification. However as we shall see some Spanish-speakers are challenging this. Also the people who make up multilingual societies do not expect to speak all the languages fluently or even at all. Only a small proportion of languages are actually used in formal education and, as a partial result, over half the world population is illiterate and vast numbers of children are forced by circumstance to do all or most of their formal learning in a foreign language (18).

This is not to minimise and legitimise the failures of the education system in Belize in identifying and tending to the language needs of Belizean children but to present another perspective from which the teachers might consider they have made achievements. They might be expected to compare themselves with the rest of the Caribbean and Central America.

#### 4.3. A programme for vernacular language education and English as a Second Language provision in primary schools.

English is the official language of Belize and perhaps it is not surprising that the mother-tongues of Belizean children are not officially exploited through a systematic pedagogical method with a view to the children's educational development as the interests involved in education have been colonial or missionary.

In Corozal Town teachers reported using Spanish ( older rural teachers like A used Maya and Spanish) to initiate the children in English and most felt the recourse to Spanish explanations for a year or two was a satisfactory method of what amounts to

teaching English as a Second Language. Some teachers were fervently opposed to using Spanish any longer than absolutely necessary as it appeared the children would never make the effort to learn English because they knew they could always fall back on a Spanish explanation. Most teachers do not recall having any problems when they suddenly found themselves as Spanish-speakers in an English-speaking environment. A child's faculty to 'pick up' the language is given as the explanation of the way the child learns and as the solution to coping with the new environment:

(W) "some teachers speak the Spanish and the English up to Standard 1\*. I would drop it from there. I would start speaking pure English as from Standard 1, you know. Because sometimes they say 'What happens if the child doesn't understand?' But if there's no other language they have to understand it. It's just like a child is learning his mother-language at home - Spanish - no other language is spoken. He ends up understanding that Spanish so I think that would happen with English." (W) \*Grade 3, i.e. the third year of primary school.

EW "...some teachers support the use of more Spanish in schools?

P Yes, unfortunately, there are some too and this I find would be most Spanish-speaking people, you see?

.....

EW What do you feel about the education system itself?

P I feel that it ... we have a good, you know, a good system.

EW But could it be made more formally bilingual in the earlier years or what?

P In the earlier years, yes.

EW What about this English as a Second Language? Could you use that for children?

P I would say just at the early beginning, because I feel if it was used throughout it will defeat them, unless we start giving them in solid Spanish, you see? I feel that if the teacher should continue right up to the like Grade 8\* it will really hinder them, in the sense that they..O.K., those who are Spanish-speaking are more comfortable in it, so they will tend to lean on it, right? And they will not break away or try to improve the English. And you know like the majority of books are in English and then like ones if they go out they could come in contact with a lot of English-speaking so I feel..(?)..But right at the infant level, especially at the beginning, you know, first group. But probably at kindergarten level, you know, like there it is a must so that the child can be understood, you know, and the child can understand the teacher I can see, but break away from it as early as possible.' \* End of primary school.

The fact children do not learn English easily or well is attributed to the interference of Creole or Spanish and the solution is apparently for the teachers in Corozal to completely suppress those languages which are learnt in other environments and already known so as to concentrate exclusively on English.

EW "How do you find the children cope in school these days? Is there any problem with it just being pure English that's used in school or..?

AW They have a lot of problems.

EW How do they cope with it? What do they do?

AW Well they, sometimes, these children don't catch up with their English language until they're nearly in Standard 6 in the 8th grade you know. All the areas that they've studied they make a lot of grammatical mistakes you know - English language and so on. But I think these children need more oral work whereby the children get more opportunity to speak you know and I think some of the teachers speak Spanish in the classroom also which does not help the child you know. He needs to listen to it more and more to be able to get it."

There is no recognition of the possibility of formally teaching them English quickly and efficiently through their mother-tongue. Yet the teachers do perceive that the children do abstract the structures of the languages in order to bridge the linguistic gap and acquire the second language:

EW "What happens in the classroom in say primary school when children arrive and they can't speak English? Do they have problems understanding the teachers and do the teachers speak different languages to them or..?

P Well normally then what we would do is to give them in Spanish

and then give them in English so that they can associate the two of them. I remember there're, you know, like in reading, there're pictures. Well they give to me in Spanish. I remember, for instance, we had, you know, an iron and they know it's an iron. They know what it's for but they know it in Spanish and when in Spanish I said 'Well, what is it?', for nouns, English and grammar. Right now, and they answer me in Spanish 'plancha' so I ask them for English to see if anybody knew and somebody said 'planch', 'planche' - 'planch' and then I said 'no' and I give them the English for it and I remember saying right, like the clothes-peg, they say in Spanish it's 'gancha' and I said 'Well, what is it in English' and they said 'ganch'."

However it is at least acknowledged that Spanish must be used as an introduction to English when the children start primary school:

P 'You know, like well a teacher doesn't know Spanish would encounter a lot of difficulties.

J, primarily a Creole speaker, said that teaching out in Paraíso where all the children speak Spanish, she found them too eager to correct her Spanish and that 'they had something like private about them', whereas in Ranchito, on the road between Corozal and Orange Walk, the children would give her a chance to try and explain in Spanish and not rush to point out her mistakes.

B "...that's the drawback here. When I started to teach they said you're not to speak nothing but the one English language.



Now if you're speaking to a child - take my nephew - I mean I felt it strange because I knew my nephew only spoke Spanish. Well he gets to school and you are there 'That's a radio, that's a radio, that's a radio' - one word - 'éste es el radio que tienes en la casa....So I say you try to tell this child what that thing is - you tell him in his language and he twigs. But then now I understand they are bringing back the Spanish.'

This particular retired teacher - B - was in fact very open to mother-tongue education and bilingual education despite her absolute conviction that children must learn English because of their examinations. The possibility of the child using her own language was felt to be her natural right and her ability to develop that language, for example Spanish, was considered an asset on the job market.

The fact that the 9 teachers or ex-teachers interviewed all acknowledged it was imperative to use Spanish in the first years of primary education for those who spoke that language indicates that E.S.L. teaching would be welcomed.

EW: "¿Y qué pasa con los niños ahora, con los niños que no hablan inglés cuando llegan a la escuela? ¿Cómo pasan los primeros años?

R: Bastante difíciles, bastante. Por ejemplo hay mucha imposición y del padre y del maestro ¿no? Una combinación, y el niño tiene que, entonces, que aprender. Pero el niño no está preparado.

EW: ¿Y nunca les enseñan inglés....suponen que hablan inglés y

nunca les enseñan?

R No, nunca. Eso es lo malo porque estamos trabajando en eso ahora aquí en el distrito de Corozal que todos los maestros que enseñan a los niños de cinco años tienen que tener español.

EW ¿Y cómo recibirán esto los maestros?

R Ahorita tenemos la fortuna de que la mayoría de los maestros ahora en el distrito acá son corozaleños, porque hace unos años era diferente también la situación y ya muchos de ellos saben el español - no avanzadamente, ¿no? Pero pueden comunicarse bien, ¿no? Transferir, ¿no? Lo que sea, por ejemplo, aritmética o matemáticas a los niños o leer, ¿no? Y eso pues, es una ayuda porque anteriormente era más terrible. Es que lo que pasaba ¿verdad? Es que muchos fracasaban en el sistema y lo podíamos ver en los resultados de sus exámenes.

However use of the mother tongue beyond the transitionary phase of becoming competent enough to function in English in class would be hotly contested by some. R pointed out that in Belize there is opposition to the use of Spanish in the classroom:

"..quiero yo también decirle de que hay muchos educadores, ¿no? que consideran que es un sistema muy mal, que dicen que si le hablas al niño en español para enseñarle matemáticas que ese niño crece con una incapacidad y que por medio de eso no puede pasar o tener éxito en los exámenes. ¿Comprende? Hay una polémica en este tema."

There is no conclusive proof of the benefits of education in the vernacular but in Belize an unsophisticated introduction to English in Spanish without differentiating between Creole and English means the primary education system caters for the few as opposed to the majority and new methods could be tried without the fear of incurring losses as the achievement made by the majority of the children is already limited. Admittedly achievement is only being measured here in terms of the numbers of secondary school pupils and the G.C.E. 'O' Level English pass rate, but surely more children have the right to develop their English and Spanish beyond the bounds of Creole and 'kitchen' Spanish, as it is referred to, which have a limited social and economic application.

The benefit most frequently cited in favour of vernacular language education is the psychological one experienced by the individual. Self-expression is most satisfactorily achieved in one's dominant language and, as no-one can doubt the adequacy of any mother tongue to meet the needs of a child's first experiences in school, it is felt there is absolutely no reason why it should not be used to ease the child through the initial adjustment period. If the teachers use the child's mother tongue in class the child will feel more 'at home' - less alienated and insecure in his new environment. His learning will be more rapid and efficient in his mother tongue, including his learning of the second language.

4.4. A programme of English as a Second Language which is required in secondary as well as primary.

Lambert (19) found that language immersion programmes at schools in Canada resulted in a subtractive bilingualism for the children of minority groups who were being immersed in a second language. He believes the solution for minority groups who face the dilemma of needing to learn a second language as a Language of Wider Communication (LWC), but equally needing to maintain their own language, is for them to first consolidate their own language at school before they are introduced to the majority language. The success of this approach for language maintenance is that the educational system is shown to value the child's skills in her mother-tongue. The child will not feel inadequate and inferior in the majority system, but take pride in the status her mother tongue has been accorded. This enhances the performance of the child in the majority language introduced at a later date.

In the U.S. A. Bruce Gaarder (20) found 'bilinguals' fare worse in intelligence tests than monolinguals because they have not been permitted to learn in their own language - the conceptual development and acquisition of the child is retarded according to the extent of his deficiency in the second language. This only applied where there were sizeable groups not commanding the language of instruction - where only one or two students do not initially speak the relevant language they do not suffer setbacks.

Brockmann points out that in Orange Walk:

'Even at the high school level, many Mestizo students have to

translate into Spanish before solving problems. All ethnic categories score low on verbal aptitude tests, which are in English, since ethnic loyalties restrict the occasions in which English, as opposed to vernacular linguistic codes, can be employed.'(21).

Rubenstein has researched the difficulties faced by Spanish-speakers in Corozal Town's schools where English is the medium of instruction. The problem Rubenstein focussed upon was the retardation in cognitive development caused by an unstructured bilingual experience. Children are not taught English as a Second Language as would be appropriate.

Rubenstein (22): 'The impact of bilingualism upon individual cognitive functioning has been the focus of research for many decades. Recently, several studies have suggested that the bilingual experience facilitates language acquisition and cognitive development. This study presents data relating nonverbal cognitive development to the acquisition of semantic knowledge that suggest that this facilitation is not always the case. Consideration of the process underlying the lack of structural complexity in L2 semantic organisation among mestizo children in Corozal Town indicates that any attempt to understand the impact of bilingualism upon the individual must be sensitive to the environmental context in which L2 is acquired. It suggests, in addition, that while bilingualism acquired in a supportive structured environment may indeed be highly beneficial, bilingualism acquired in a stressful environment may result in serious and predictable deficits in linguistic, and

perhaps cognitive, functioning.

The stress caused by having to learn in a second or third language, without any language support, is increased by the child's awareness that the language in question has to be mastered if educational and occupational success is sought. All this whilst the mestizos' own language is not conferred an equivalent status, which would in fact befit another world language. It is not common practice to write in Spanish in Belize, except for notes and letters for members of the family or monolinguals. Literacy in Spanish is not taught at school - by all reports Spanish-speakers simply pick up reading and writing in Spanish at home. Those who go to secondary school formally discover what their language looks like on paper.

"Other books I read them in English because I feel a little bit more competent to go through them easier without a dictionary since the Spanish we speak is not a good Spanish as other countries, that Spanish was their first language, number 1 language like Mexico, Guatemala. There are certain words that we do not use in Spanish, you know, like the Spanish we use in everyday language we call it simple Spanish. Words like 'alcoba' - if I use that word, very few people will understand what 'alcoba' means and other words. So when I speak with them I speak most of a simple language, but when I speak to someone that knows a little bit more Spanish, I try to keep up with these persons'(L).

L says this is because they are not taught Spanish in primary

school.

The child faces the devaluation of her language and this can lead to an inferiority complex and to feeling ashamed of one's background. R and S both said it was common practice for teachers to punish children for using Spanish:

S "Sometimes the teacher used to punish us. They used to say that if anybody wants to say a word they have to say it in English...yes, they lash us. They used to have the teacher's rope and stick. We always used to steal the rope and throw it away."

However this stress is also experienced by the Creole child although perhaps not so acutely. Complaints of the interference of Creole in written English were frequent - only one such complaint was made regarding Spanish interference:

"This is shown a lot in their writing because the way I tell them, you know, well, they think it in Spanish and they translate it, but they write it - it's English, but the structure is Spanish. For instance, you know, the Spanish words like adjectives it would be behind the noun so when they write in English they would put the adjectives behind the noun, you see? And I could see, you know, like in sentence constructions, they find it harder writing. They can't see where they are thinking in their mother-tongue and they translate it - the structure - as the same. The writing is in English but the structure is in that language. It's a problem because you know they don't really see



it."

Teachers usually spoke of how the Creole children would write Creole and not English:

J "Of those children we had last year in the sixth standard I noticed that the ones that, the young sort of children that are going to talk Creole, they can write good English, good compositions. But then we had a family they're Spanish but they're Spanish - the mother is Coolie. And it's a very gifted child, but dark Spanish like my colour and they talk only Creole. I know the child write, the child sorta she writes it - it doesn't spell in Creole, but the way she words her sentences is in Creole."

EW "Is the creole being lost?"

B No, on the contrary. They try to insist that they're speaking well, you know. Even at home when they go and someone says something, you know? Because what he hears he will write that boy - 'the boy gone'"

Abdelali Benthalia (23) talks about this phenomenon in relation to Moroccan children. He quotes Gal,C (24):

'Children of Arabic speaking countries are astonished, when entering the primary school, to find that the language of their mother was wrong and faulty and they have to acquire a totally new idiom:-the little pupil is at variance with his mother tongue and vacillates between 2 extremes: shall he speak as he learned to write at school, or write as he naturally speaks?'

The fact that the Belizean child never manages to overcome interference from her mother-tongue and possibly Creole too is hardly surprising as the different languages a child is coping with are never compared and contrasted systematically during the child's education so that she can distinguish between the linguistic structures of them all. The child tends to associate the different language structures too much or simply pool all cognitively available structures.

EW "What sort of problem is there with children who speak mainly Creole then? Do they have any real problem?"

MP They have it harder than Spanish-speaking kids.

EW Why do you think...?

MP Because they have been accustomed to hear you know the similar noun - the 2 words.. and when they hear it correct you know. So when the teacher says that, that's the sound for it, they have been trained from small you know and then it is harder. Even when we were at teacher's college the Creole-speaking teachers, you know, they suffered that awfully speaking and Mrs Williams, our language-teacher, she always used to say it - Spanish-speaking have an easier time."

Teachers need to be trained to teach the child new languages quickly and efficiently by differentiating Spanish from English and Creole from English. Le Page (15) specifies the problem faced by Creole speakers:

'The problem for most West Indian children in the Creole-English speaking islands is not that of foreign-language learners of English or native speakers. Their Creole speech has no literary norm other than that of standard English; but as a spoken language it has its own phonological, grammatical, lexical, and semantic structures, which differ, often quite sharply, from those of the spoken dialects that underline the standard usage of the textbooks of the examiners. But neither the teachers nor the children are equipped to recognise the differences. Instead of being able to keep the 2 systems separate, therefore, the children try to make one composite system out of the vernacular they know in their homes and the model language they are supposedly taught in school; the result satisfies nobody - not even themselves, for whom it remains an artificial construct. The problem is greatly intensified by the fact that so many of the teachers are untrained, unsure of their own command of the model language, and therefore poor teachers of it.'

Appendix 2 contains two extracts from English Language exercises given to children on the 1984 summer course prior to entry to secondary school in the autumn of that year. The teachers explained that summer school was designed to give a second chance of selection to those children who had not made the grade in the B.N.S.C. It appeared to apply to those who had gained between 60 - 80%. The first exercise is a traditional grammar exercise whereby the pupils have to classify 20 sentences as either simple, compound, complex or compound-complex. The content of the sentences is culturally alien to Belize and the sentences are

in the diction and style of the 1940s. The second one is an attempt to eradicate mistakes in English. Numbers 19 - 23 refer specifically to mistakes which would arise from Creole interference - for example, a singular instead of a plural verb, double prepositions, formation of the past tense with 'got' as an auxiliary instead of 'had' and the extension of the regular -ed past tense ending to irregular forms. The other mistakes could have been made by any English speaker. The conclusion one is tempted to make is that basically the examination which these children are being prepared for, i.e., the G.C.E. 'O' level is not adjusted to modern English usage, never mind Caribbean varieties. The children in the classes where these exercises were completed were coping quite well - some very well - but it was all rather tiresome and abstract to say the least. They would have been better occupied in more active and creative language exercises and practice, whether oral or written, or reading a story they could relate to and feel a little inspired by as a result. Too much time is being wasted on academic standard models which are unrealistic - when would the child ever need to speak like that? The Belizean newspapers certainly do not reproduce the variety of English taught in the schools but a local Creolised version.

I only sat in classes for a day but Rubenstein (14) no doubt had more chance to observe in the classroom. He criticises the teaching for an excessive dependence on mimicry, memorisation and rote-learning and the fact reading lessons were mainly exploited to improve pronunciation.

Le Page (15) outlines the qualifications a specialist would need to train teachers who would deal effectively with the children's complicated linguistic environment and consequent problems in school:

'It is essential that these specialists have a thorough training in linguistics, psychological and sociological aspects of linguistic behaviour, the psychology of language learning, the processes of Creolization, the principles of contrastive analysis, and the structures of the languages involved in their situation (e.g. Creole, English, Creole French, English, Spanish, Maya). They must also be trained in the general principles of education, and in the use of audio-visual aids, radio and television'

Part and parcel of this package would be to improve the teachers' own command of English and to provide in-service training which would bring existing teachers into sympathy with new ideas wherever possible.'

4.5. Refugee language needs highlight those of Spanish-speaking Belizean children.

It is worth pointing out here that the whole question of the provision of education in the vernacular language and of English as a Second Language was highlighted at workshops funded by the World University Service (W.U.S.) in the summer of 1984. The aim of W.U.S. was to train teachers to impart E.S.L. education to Salvadorean refugees in Belize. The Belizean government did not

specify that the E.S.L. workshops were directed towards teaching refugees and in the workshop in Corozal Town many teachers felt - some more strongly than others - that money should be spent on improving education for Belizeans, not refugees. So it appears there is a certain disposition towards a concerted programme of E.S.L. teaching.

Other teachers also took the opportunity, when airing this grievance, to say that Spanish should also be used as a language of instruction in schools. It was felt by some that the arrival of more refugee children would finally necessitate teaching literacy in Spanish in Belizean schools before moving on to learning literacy in English.

Not surprisingly J specified that she deals with the young refugee children starting school in the same way Belizean Spanish-speaking children are introduced to English. However the problems arose with older children who could not speak English and their attempts were laughed at by some Belizean children. For J this meant some had to swallow too much pride to learn English and so they dropped out. Other children however showed every determination to learn English and did very well. J says "it all depends on their drive and their ambition".

The Refugee Office estimates that the number of aliens in the country has risen from 1200 (1984) to 1500 (1985 - approximate figures only). Aliens are all those foreign nationals who are living in Belize whatever their status and purpose. These aliens are predominantly Salvadoreans and Guatemalans - Hondurans are

specifically excluded as they tend to be seasonal migrant workers. The latest figures for the total number of refugees (specifically Salvadorean) in the country is 3226 registered by June 1985, or 2.1% of the population (from the Ministry of Home Affairs). Up to 15 people apply for refugee status every week (10). This status is conferred on people whom the Belizean government considers cannot live in their home country without risking their lives. The former P.U.P. government gave an amnesty of 90 days during the summer of 1984 for refugees to register with the Immigration Department.

These refugees may constitute only a temporary phenomenon in Belize and indeed Belize has seen influxes of refugees disperse and/or be absorbed on various occasions before now. The Salvadorean refugees I met intended to go home as soon as possible or move onto the States. However if they were to settle in Belize through choice or force of circumstance, they would significantly increase the numbers of Spanish-speaking children in schools. Again the Salvadoreans I met were extremely keen to learn English but would this be the case if they decided to settle to a rural life in Belize? It will be interesting to see if pressure is put on the schools for literacy in Spanish and bilingual, if not exclusively Spanish, education or if the new Belizeans will mingle into Belizean life and pick up Creole and willingly learn English.

#### 4.6. A Bilingual Education System?

Most teachers in Corozal would show their agreement with the



introduction of a bilingual education system. However I feel they often understood this merely involves teaching Spanish as a subject which is already done in secondary schools there. According to J there is also a Schools Broadcast of two Spanish lessons of fifteen minutes each per week for primary schools. They usually justified this opinion by referring to what an asset bilingualism is for further studies or on the job market. Spanish speakers pointed out that some Belizean students go to study in Mexico or Guatemala, as did AW:

"después de que se gradúan de aquí y quieren seguir sus estudios van a México, Panamá, Costa Rica y tienen que agarrar clases en español."

Also: "Mira tenemos un problema ahorita. El año pasado México ofreció unas becas, ¿no? - para muchachos aquí, beliceños, y mandamos como unos veinte y de los veinte, más de un cincuenta por ciento regresaron porque vieron difícil.. Tienen toda la acreditación, pero es inglés y cuando tuvieron que enfrentarse entonces a estudiar biología o química en español, no pudieron hacerlo - la terminología" (R).

B "...and another thing is that when they go to college they got to have Spanish for that examination - it's an asset for them. And another thing they're so near to Chetumal they all go to Chetumal often - the children can help themselves when they cross over. You see we have more Spanish, right? It's only a few years that you see a little coloured guy around here you know"

And finally: "When you have, you know, like people who open business and what not, you know, they expect you to speak English, but they always say that like secretaries they are better if they are bilingual English and Spanish" (M).

There was also the feeling that Belize is after all part of Central America which is Spanish-speaking, as exemplified by J:

EW "Do you think education, the education system in Belize would benefit from being bilingual? Or do you think it should stay just in English the way it is?

J No, I think it should be bilingual. It helps a lot. You got a college degree and you're bilingual? - some of these hotels, you know, they ask. Jobs are a scarcity in the country - I think bilingual is an asset because certain times they ask you for, they will specify they would like a bilingual, you see?

EW And you think that can be accommodated by the whole system becoming bilingual or would it just be adequate to, say, have a few classes of Spanish?

J I would say Belize should go bilingual

EW Belize should?

J Because I think somewhere like around this area..in Latin America it's not English, it's Spanish. So if we go, first of all we go this way, first of all we need the Spanish. We go the next way - English, so we swapping about to survive."

AW believed the Spanish-speaking children really appreciate the

chance to learn to write Spanish in secondary school. I asked how the children reacted to their Spanish classes:

"Bueno para ellos, yo creo que para ellos era un encanto. Yo creo que a ellos les gustaban sus clases de español, porque, simplemente para mí, se debe a una cosa agradable y al mismo tiempo era importante enseñarles la gramática porque, bueno, tú sabes que todos hablan español en casa aquí en Corozal. A todos lados pasa, pero en la primaria, pues, no se les enseña la gramática de español hasta en la secundaria. Allá es a donde se les puede presentar. Bueno, pero cualquier tipo que se les presente la gramática lo agradecen, por que creo que todos ellos quieren saber cómo se escribe tal palabra. Pero nos sorprende cuando llegamos a saber que tal palabra se deletrea de este modo, ¿no? Por ejemplo 'vaca' y nosotros estamos diciendo 'vaca' toda la vida y pensando que se deletrea con 'b' de 'burro' y todo depende de enseñar no es 'b' de 'burro' es 'v' de 'vaca'. Es una sorpresa."

On the other hand M, although she said she thoroughly enjoyed being bilingual, did not believe school time should be spent on learning Spanish as Spanish-speakers already know Spanish and they need to concentrate on learning English.

EW "So what do you think about the Spanish they teach in secondary schools?

M I think it's rubbish because really I knew all the Spanish"

She had learnt to write Spanish well but most writing is done in

English. This comment was in stark contrast to the feeling experienced by many Spanish-speakers that their particular variety of Spanish was 'underdeveloped' (R) compared to Mexican Spanish:

W "I speak the Spanish here at home but I'm not quite fluent at it...You know what happens to me when I'm reading Spanish I would have to have a Spanish-English dictionary beside me and whenever I come to a word I don't understand I would have to look it up. May be it's because I didn't study grammatical Spanish. I didn't go to high school

EW Exactly, and you miss a lot because home Spanish is really different?

W Yes, it's different the one you study and the one you read because the one you read is grammatical Spanish. I think it's my problem."

It's worth noting here that M and W both come from Spanish-speaking families and speak to their own families in Spanish, but they identify with English. The explanation is that they are so accustomed to teaching in English they feel they know that language best. M and her husband speak in English together.

However the following 2 Corozalenians prefer to speak in Spanish:

AW: "bueno la verdad es que, pues, lo que estoy notando es que me siento confortable hablando español. Pues sí hay veces me siento un poquito limitado cuando quiero usar ciertos términos

como..ciertos términos de cosas como hablando de mi coche, ¿no?  
El otro día, no más, me sorprendí que un señor me dijo en Orange  
Walk, me dice

- Cierra el capirote, me dice

-¿Qué? le digo

- El capirote es del..(?)..., me dice

Le digo:

- No sé cómo aprender hablar el español así

Me dice:

- La verdad es que yo crecí en el lado Mari Carmen.

Pero nosotros en Belice no usamos 'capirote', usamos 'bonnet'.

More extreme is R's opinion that the alingualism he feels he  
suffers from can only be resolved by imparting a monolingual  
education in Belize.

R "Y la cosa es de que uno puede llegar a un extremo, ¿verdad? de  
tener poco control de lenguaje. Casi no funcionamos. Yo puedo  
decir, pues, yo sé hablar español. Bueno, tal vez español  
solamente de la casa, pero no puedo hablar el español industrial,  
profesional, ¿no? ¿Cómo decir? Yo tengo que luchar ahora para  
abrir un paso en la agricultura y eso quiere decir que tengo que  
tener contacto con el Ministro de Agricultura o tengo que hacer  
contactos en Chetumal y poder articular, expresarse bien y yo  
digo que en estos términos estamos bastante limitados.

EW ¿Con el inglés igual?

R Igual y eso me tiene a mí bastante preocupado, ¿verdad?

EW Entonces, ¿Ud. diría que está bien aprender tantas lenguas?

R Yo diría, ¿no? que hay que aprender bien uno. Por ejemplo el español, ¿no? y decidir. Belice tiene que decidir si es el español o el inglés y si es el español hay que empujar todo por el español en las escuelas.

#### 4.7. The appropriate language policy for education in Belize?

English as the only officially recognised medium of instruction in schools is an education policy which is insensitive to the needs of Belizean children. Belizean children speak Creole, Spanish, Garífuna, Ket'chi, Mopan or Yucatecan Maya at home. These languages should never be scorned as B states:

"You see down south in Stann Creek the tiniest little guy knows to speak his language. He knows to speak the Dangringa and Carib language you know and when they come from the village and they speak Maya you look down at them you know. And the people go like 'That's your language!' You should be proud of your language. You know what I mean? Now in Stann Creek this little guy he knows to rattle off his language. He speaks English at school, but you see he knows his language, which is fine. It's an asset to them that they know their own language."

As we have seen there are psychological and educational reasons

for believing that a child's development would benefit from the possibility of using her first language at school. Creole is the spontaneous 'street' language and yet it is constantly referred to in negative terms as a 'dialect' - 'it's not a language'. Such attitudes reflect the low status Creole has been given historically, but, as we shall see, it is the most dynamic language in the country and whilst English has a clear socio-economic value, a Creole-speaking child will inherit an inferior self-image and lack confidence. Belizean Spanish is made a mockery of too. It is often referred to as 'kitchen' Spanish because of the amount of Maya words incorporated into it. A Belizean lawyer remarked that he had learnt Spanish at school but that it did not help him understand Belizean Spanish speakers so he had dropped it.

As a Belizean child will not go into school speaking English then it is only just that English should be taught to her as a Second Language and/or that language support should be offered to help her cope with the language demands of all the subjects to be studied.

Beyond these comments regarding language in Belizean education one could of course question the use of English as the medium of instruction at all. Why not Spanish? I mention these two world languages as possible media of instruction because of the advantages to a poor government of these languages being already developed and able to express modern scientific and technological matters and academic abstractions. Also teaching materials will be more readily available in these languages. The absence of



these advantages in the more local indigenous languages would appear to make them an expensive choice for secondary education but there is reason to believe their use in primary education would be a good investment as an advanced fluency in the mother-tongue can only aid a better and more rapid cognitive development in a second language.

Considerations of cost have to be made in the choice of languages of instruction even though this could be a false pragmatism. Is it more costly to teach every child in its vernacular language as encouraged by U.N.E.S.C.O. in 1953 (25) than to fail teaching it in a second language? I personally believe the time and resources required to train teachers and produce materials in the number of vernaculars that some underdeveloped and undeveloped countries embrace is an unrealistic expectation. Wealthy developed countries have difficulties achieving this degree of pluralism, though admittedly the will to do so is weak. Every effort must be made to provide a transitory language education in the vernacular, but a second language will probably have to be resorted to as the main language of instruction. Such transitory or subtractive bilingualism is undeniably assimilationist in the long term no matter how vital and unaffected the vernaculars appear to be in the short term. The choice of LWCs as languages of instruction does amount to supporting the suppression of perfectly valid, legitimate languages. Compromise seems to be the order of the day:

EW ¿Qué opina Ud? ¿Qué sería una buena solución a todos los

problemas que existen en cuanto a barreras lingüísticas en Belice?

A Pues yo creo que se debe propagar las tres lenguas pero en particular enseñar el niño en su lengua natal, en su lengua en el cual se ha vivido, en el cual ha nacido y enseñarle las otras lenguas. Digamos pues, en particular el inglés, que es una lengua no de nosotros sino es una lengua ajena, forastera, que llamamos una lengua de segundo grado. Igualmente el español aunque el español tiene más afinidad para con nuestra comunidad debido a nuestras raíces mexicanas en el cual se ha propagado el español.

....

EW entonces, ¿sería bueno tener una educación bilingüe o sólo en otra lengua, pero en español o el maya?

A Yo creo que se debe ser bilingüe para empezar y no olvidarse del lenguaje nato que es el maya. Sin embargo es indispensable de que la persona o la gente en total deben de conocer el español y el inglés, considerando, por ejemplo, los cambios internacionales en política, los cambios sociales económicas. Nos estamos acercando mucho más ahora a Latinoamérica y estas relaciones nos obliga, nos exigen que sepamos tanto la lengua inglesa y la española."

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (9) recorded the following:

'Everywhere English is, from the beginning, the medium of instruction in schools. Spanish is taught in secondary schools

but a start has now been made in introducing the teaching of Spanish in primary schools and bilingualism is the objective. Nearly everyone speaks an English dialect known as 'Creole'. It is the most popular vernacular in the country.'

This is the only time I have actually seen a hint of a suggestion for a bilingual education policy in Belize in writing. The Chief Education Officer, Mr Ignacio Sánchez, has said to me that this was the P.U.P. government's unofficial position as if it were to be made official there would be uproar on the right-wing of their own party and amongst the opposition party - the U.D.P. An increased use of Spanish in the schools would be interpreted by the latter as yet another step towards 'latinization'. The P.U.P.'s past flirtations with Guatemala despite its claim of sovereignty over Belize; the P.U.P. government's relations with countries like Cuba, Nicaragua and Panama; the amnesty given to illegal immigrants in 1984; and the increasing recognition of Spanish by politicians and on the radio and in schools are all actions regarded with suspicion by the Creoles and those who do not wish Belize to move closer to Central America.

But the Spanish-speaking mestizos appear resolved to have their language placed on an equal footing with English at the very least and this assertiveness coincides with the power they have gained over the past two decades, although this will be checked by the collapse of the sugar industry in Belize. However there are far fewer monolingual Spanish speakers than Creole ones. Also the Creoles' hopes for socioeconomic advance are pinned on

studying outside the country or working in the U.S. so they are only interested in learning English. The P.U.P. could have unnerved the Creoles just a little too much since it has in fact given them very little support. The P.U.P. lost power in November, 1984. As Le Page (26) puts it some Creoles 'are uneasily aware that they are in danger of becoming a subordinate caste in what they regard as their own country.'

In the following chapters we shall be looking at all the considerations that would affect a choice of language policy in Belize. We have looked at some of the educational issues involved and now we shall cover the cultural, socioeconomic and political factors a Belizean policy-maker could not afford to ignore.

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## Chapter 5

### Language attitudes

#### 5.0 Whose language attitudes?

No attempt is made here to claim the language attitudes covered in this section are representative of Belizeans' attitudes towards the languages spoken in their country. The sample was not aiming to be quantitative and as a qualitative probe into language attitudes it is based mainly on the responses of middle-class teachers in Corozal Town. This chapter should be taken as a partial insight into, or some indication of, the attitudes Belizeans in a Spanish-speaking community have to their linguistic environment. The guidelines for questions on which conversations with people from Corozal were based, ~~are~~ in Appendix 1. As in Ryan and Giles (1) language attitudes were

'taken in a broad, flexible sense as any affective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reactions toward different language varieties or their speakers'.

The fact a person chooses to speak in English or Spanish is as indicative as what she says. Beliefs about languages and their speakers, as well as all the social connotations a respondent gives to varying language behaviour in Belize, are covered. Some attention is given to the value of language attitude research in the conclusion.

### 5.1. Attitudes towards English

"Belize was a British colony, so Spanish was not considered the number one language. English was considered number 1 language because the governor of Belize was from Great Britain. District officers before the appointed locals..most of them were British. So we were completely in a British system..and every representative from Great Britain spoke English, not Spanish and I want to say that in those days that was the British contribution why now English is a major language in Belize." (L)

It is appropriate in Belize to use English in those domains connected to central government. This is the case according to Koenig (2) and Brockmann (3 & 4), but in actual fact English only appears to be absolutely necessary in the courts - where a translator may be provided, in the police station - where the employees are predominantly Creole, and in school. 'English' should be understood here as a Creolised English as the model for English is standard West Indian English but it is creolised to varying degrees when it is spoken in Belize.

A "hablan más el criollo pues, no es inglés. Bueno sí lo llamamos inglés, bien, pero, yo creo que más hablan criollo, la mezcla de inglés, español y toda clase de cosas."

We shall continue to refer to English as this is the target language in the more formal and official domains. Raw or broad Creole of the Brah Anansi stories is really only associated with Belize city or District, as we can see in the two quotes below.

W "The big girl she speaks pure English, mainly Creole because

she's in the Creole system - she's in Belize right now with her friends and at her age she's fooling around more with Creole than the real correct - she doesn't bother to speak it when she speaks."

AW (re. parents) "ellos hablan el inglés.. tenían negocio en Belice así que tenían que aprender el inglés o más bien el criollo es lo que hablan el criollo, ¿no?"

J differentiated this 'Creole' from Creole as it is spoken elsewhere, which she calls 'broken English'. By a comparison of the frequency of certain syntactic features varying in Creole and broken English, Geneviève Escure (5) determined that the Garífuna speak broken English or class-room West Indian English rather than Creole. A young Garífuna stated to her:

"I like the Broken English, I don't like speaking Creole; it sounds too bad."

It is certainly the case that the Garífuna attach stigma to Creole as does everyone else in Belize and that they have learnt a more standard West Indian English in order to compete with Creoles on the job market.

Le Page (6) notes this broken English or Creole in the districts outside Belize has been influenced by Spanish to a certain extent.

J and L, Creole-speakers first and foremost, said Creole was spoken in all establishments in Corozal and P, another speaker of

Creole as Ll, said they all had at least one employee who was bilingual.

For most Corozaleniens from Spanish-speaking backgrounds there is a single dichotomy in the functional distribution of Spanish and English. Spanish is spoken at home and English at work.

R "Pues yo me siento más seguro, más confiado en español, ¿verdad? porque yo en la casa con mi esposa y mis hijos más hablamos en español. Pero sí tenemos que enfrentarnos a la realidad, ¿no? y sabemos que el lenguaje oficial es el inglés y no podemos abandonarlo y que de una manera, yo, todo lo que hago, lo hago en inglés. Pero hablar socialmente es el español. Profesionalmente, vamos a ponerlo así mejor ¿verdad? Profesionalmente, pues, todo es inglés, ¿no? Pero socialmente ya vamos hablar en, con los amigos, con la familia, ¿no? vamos hablar en español."

And AW said of his children:

"No hablan inglés. Bueno hablan inglés. Lo saben escribir. Lo estudiaron formalmente. Sí, saben inglés. Sí pueden usar el inglés, pero cuando nosotros comunicamos en la casa es en español..solamente por la mamá. Es la más dominante, ¿ves?"

'Jokes' aside, the mother mainly spoke Spanish - what English she knew she had learnt in primary school.

A "Pues considerando, como le dije, de que sí necesitamos el inglés para llevar a cabo transacciones, pues tienen que aprender inglés. Pero aquí en la casa, como le digo, y a ver con los

familiares españoles, tiene que ser español y es español."

P, from a mixed background, specified she spoke Creole at home:

"At home I don't speak in English..like I find if I start talking to them in English, they say that it sounds funny and they understand..but then, I don't really see the need for it."

M speaks in Spanish to her children and in English to her husband. W has to speak Spanish at home because her husband does not speak English but she speaks English with her daughter more and more. She expresses her identity with Creole in no uncertain terms - "Spanish doesn't attract me". M does not feel this way towards Spanish, but states she enjoys being bilingual and chooses to speak English with her husband. Clearly people are gradually switching their loyalties although they might not acknowledge the situation themselves or are reluctant to make the choice which so obviously involves abandoning Spanish. Smailus (7) came across this transitional phase:

'In other cases the second language is used more often and is therefore mastered better, although the first language is the object of emotional identification. These cases usually go along with a silent change of group identification.'

These two teachers enjoyed speaking English as did P. They all claimed they preferred speaking English because that was the language they expressed themselves in best after so many years of teaching.

P "I got in the habit of speaking English from when I was in school and you know then I began teaching everyday, you know, the 8 hours in class is in English. You know so I got in the habit of speaking English that sometimes when I am speaking Spanish there are some words, you know, I know them, but I just can't get them out you know and before going through all that I'd rather speak the English - all the words - I remember all the words. It's easier to speak English."

It must be remembered that speakers of English are associated with people who have a good education and so their choice might be a claim to a certain status and prestige.

The motivation for learning English is instrumental as it is required in order to gain good jobs. The children interviewed at the Corozal Community College (C.C.C.) were all aware of the importance of English for further studies and on the job market, as were the adults.

R "El inglés es la lengua de la economía, de los negocios, del comercio y hasta ahorita no te sorprendería a ver en los papeles que si quieres un trabajo tienes que tener tres G.C.E.s 'O' levels e inglés debe de ser uno."

Even in those cases where people might identify with English it should be remembered that in Belize English is not a language of solidarity. It is the language spoken by government people, politicians, teachers and high-school students. As such you are liable to be accused of putting on airs and graces if you speak English when normally people would use Creole.

EW "What other languages do you speak?"

J "Spanish and English. We can, you know, it's just a bad style, because for instance, if you meet people that talk English - European, you know, you're going to talk English. But if you meet your own local people and you try talking English to them you know, or speaking sort of accent, they will say 'What the hell?' 'What's wrong with her?' 'She's, you know, putting on airs or something?'"

Rubinstein (8) and Koenig (2) found English was associated with snobbery too. M said she talked in Creole to her neighbours and to anyone else who addressed her in Creole or people would think she thought she was better than them because she had been to college. P is proud of the fact she is a teacher and can speak English and this pride seems to determine her perception of the language situation in Belize. It must not be forgotten that P was addressing herself to an English person but she was adamant that Belizeans were tending to speak English more than Creole. She said children in Corozal when they are playing would tend not to speak Spanish but Creole or English. She said the children are highly motivated to learn English because they feel it is an achievement to speak English. She said that people were coming to identify themselves as Belizeans and not as a particular racial group:

P "Everybody is just trying to be recognised as Belizean, you see, instead of just well being 'I am mestizo, you are Creole'



and, you know, separated..trying to find an identity, you see, and I really do believe that has happened."

This new Belizean speaks English:

P "All the different races nowadays are speaking the English more, right? They are getting the English - the English is going to be like a common bond between the people, right?"

For her people in Belize City speak English rather than Creole and she describes herself as English:

P "I would call myself English although, you know, well I have the problem of the Creole, right, but I think I would call myself English".

However she does recognise English is associated with pretentiousness or conceit.

P "I could speak fairly well in English with him (her husband). I suppose even with the children but then you know we don't do it. Probably on account of the environment in which we live, you know. Like our people have a way of feeling that if you start talking English here and not Creole, well you feel as though you are important."

So the teachers were aware of the social dislocation caused by using English for the informal domains where Creole is appropriate. They are constrained to speak in Creole. They considered that many villagers did not speak English well because they did not care to do so.

J "People really know to talk English - you know, if they've been to school. But they just don't really care."

B "You speak to the villagers and they understand but they don't talk and I think - to my way of thinking it's because they are ashamed and they are not ambitious."

English and its speakers are associated with socioeconomic success - yet it is Spanish-speakers who have been actually achieving this, but there is no recognition of the fact as they do not enjoy the covert status related to Creole values and the Creole life-style. However as we shall see they have been trying to change this.

## 5.2 Language attitudes towards Spanish

There is a certain stigma attached to speaking Spanish as A points out:

EW "Y, este, entonces, ¿con los amigos habla español?

A Pues depende quiénes son los amigos. Si los amigos son, digamos, de mí, del rango mestizo, pues yo les hablo español y si hay algunos mestizos que también, por manera de complejo no quieren hablar español y quieren hablar criollo, también hablan criollo."

There is also a derogatory attitude towards the Spanish spoken in Belize. One Creole referred to it as 'kitchen Spanish' - not disdainfully, but in a totally matter of fact manner. This

'kitchen Spanish' apparently has a lot of Maya in it - a point also made by W whose husband speaks Spanish only:

"At home here I speak to him in Spanish and everything but I don't know. I feel like we don't have - I personally don't have the correct thing - the correct grammatical words in Spanish - like we still have this - some of the words, points you know that we learned from our grandparents. I think it was mixed with Maya or..because my grandparents used to speak Maya."

A Mestizo called Belizean Spanish 'Spanglish' and thought it was the subject of great humour. A called it a 'patois':

A "Hablan el español también como un patois".

We have already seen some Spanish-speakers who feel Belizean Spanish is undeveloped compared with Mexican Spanish. However some do not seem to perceive Belizean Spanish to be inadequate in any sense. JB said she spoke Spanish like a Belizean and not like a Mexican. S said Mexican Spanish has a different accent.

Code-switching into English/Creole is a characteristic of Belizean Spanish, as are a very distinct Creole 'r' and numerous calques like 'abanico' for electric fan - as opposed to 'ventilador' in Mexican Spanish. Other Corozaleniens pointed out that the Spanish in northern Belize is very much influenced by Mexican Spanish and in the south and west of Belize by Guatemalan features.

L "There's one difference in Spanish, you know? The people who

live in the south and in the west, their pronunciation is different from the people living in the border here and there are a few words that are not the same, for example, like the word 'turkey'. The word 'turkey' in Corozal and in Orange Walk is known as 'pavo'..then in Cayo it is known as 'chunto'..'.. In PG they call - Guatemala all around the west - they call it 'chumpe'... Yes, for example, 'dog' we have called that 'perro', and in Cayo the word they call it 'chucho'. So it is in many other words and even the language itself, even in Spanish. In the west they would say, they would use the word 'la', 'la' for most of the females. They won't say like just 'María', they won't say 'Elisa the inglesa'. It's 'la María' - an Indian is 'la María' and 'la Elisa'. Now for the male it's just the use of 'el', you know they use the word 'el'. Now here in Corozal we don't use the 'el' or the 'la'. We use the person's name. That does make a difference. So when I talk to a person coming from the border of Guatemala, it's a different pronunciation than a person living in the Mexican border. There are words that their pronunciation they would use 'tú'. We don't use the word 'tú'. 'Ven acá' we say - 'Ven acá' They would say 'ven acá tú' It's a very different pronunciation".

Traditionally Corozal Town has been the home of well-off mestizo Spanish-speakers and the District inhabited by Maya-speaking Indians. In Corozal Spanish-speakers use Spanish in the home, with the Spanish-speaking neighbours, in the street and in the establishments where there is another Spanish-speaker - if they cannot or do not choose to speak Creole. **B**ecause Spanish is not

used in organisations which are linked to the national government or economy, for example, banks, insurance companies, civil service offices, Spanish-speakers use English at work. They may use Spanish to deal with clients but work is executed in English and the written language is always English.

The official status of English has deprived Spanish of official functions in institutions like government and school. We have already seen that the divide between English in this official capacity and Spanish in a largely domestic capacity has caused a sense of alingualism in certain speakers. I.E. Sánchez (9) writes that in the north:

'Channel 13 of the Mexican television network is received in all homes with television sets. This is good for Belizean mestizos, for now they can up-date their Spanish language and culture'

The denial of certain functions to a language, especially such that it is confined to the home, is seen as part of the process of the increasingly unequal functional distribution which leads to a language death (10). However in Corozal it is felt that Spanish will never disappear because it is spoken in the home and it is a border town and it is closer and cheaper to go to Chetumal to shop. W and M were certain Spanish was not going to die out

EW "So do you think Spanish is being threatened?

M I don't think so. Not as long as we speak it to the kids. No way and not as long as we live right close to the border

either, because we need to communicate with them because there we go for our shopping."

There is a great sense of affinity with Mexico in Corozal Town - at least among a certain sector of the population. People have family over the border and they go there for their social and recreational life as well as shopping - the devaluation of the peso has meant it has been particularly cheap since 1982.

P "Since Corozal is so close to the Mexican border, it has a lot of Mexican influence you see - in food, even in clothing, even in customs you know. For instance..these people. the girls at fifteen they always have a big celebration, a big party, you know, and all this sort of thing and when I was a child it wasn't so common..lately you know like I find people here really try to associate themselves a lot with the Mexicans - in things like that - in Carnival. It's true we used to have a carnival at one time. It was dying, but you know, like they are trying, especially in Corozal District, they are trying to keep it up and again this is more like a Mexican style."

It is felt by some that English is a weapon for the Creoles against the mestizos. There were complaints against the discrimination exercised against Spanish speakers by the police and the customs officers in St Elena.

R "Hemos notado de que el lenguaje es una poderosa arma social...la policia siempre ha sido dominada por la clase criolla y a veces era lamentable ver, ¿no? uno, tal vez de la aldea que sólo sabe español. Hace unos, tal vez, diez años, y sigue

también, que vienen aquí hacer una queja en las estaciones de policía y le dicen en español, le dicen pues - 'No te entiendo. Pero no te entiendo ni nada'. ¿ Ve? ¿ Comprende? ¿ Ve que es discriminatorio para el pueblo?"

He adds that all jobs in the civil service go to Creoles and not Mestizos because they are more likely to be qualified in English. S said the customs officials treated Mexicans very badly on the border exploiting the fact that they cannot speak English. R also complained that at a meeting of the Board of Governors of Corozal Community College, there had been objections to the use of Spanish even though some of the governors did not speak English. He also said Radio Belize did not transmit enough in Spanish:

"Radio Belice apenas nos da 2 o 3 horas de español - todo está hecho en inglés; ¿qué pasaría si nosotros clamaríamos por nuestros derechos culturales?"

Radio Belize is mainly broadcast in English. However Spanish is on the air at peak listening times - late Sunday afternoon and in the early evenings on weekdays. There are transmissions in Mopan and Ket'chi Maya and Garífuna too.

R and A were both involved in 'La Asociación para la Promoción de la Lengua Española' and as we can see in their comments quoted throughout this study, they are very much against English and the Creoles and anything associated with Belize's colonial history. R said there had been a new self-awareness since independence for



the Mestizos:

"Yo creo que sí ha cambiado. Ha habido una transformación, una concientación - si podemos usar ese término para...conocemos más...saber quién somos, nuestra historia y eso mismo entonces nos hace empujar nuestra lenguaje. Lenguaje y cultura van pegaditos, ¿ves? Entonces la misma independencia de toda la transformación, ¿verdad? Entonces nosotros estamos descubriéndonos - quiénes somos, de dónde venimos."

R was very keen to defend the interests of the Spanish-speaking Maya-mestizo villagers and expressed their frustration in the following terms:

"Yo creo que hay un gigante, un tigre durmiendo"

"Puede surgir un conflicto ...yo creo que sí va a surgir porque ya vienen más muchachos ya preparados y ellos están clamando sus derechos ahora, como pidiendo más atención".

However it is middle-class Spanish speakers who actually feel aggrieved . Those who feel Spanish should be given more importance in Belize justified this belief by reasoning that Belize's geographical location makes Spanish a necessity as all Belize's neighbours are Spanish-speaking nations.

R "Nosotros tenemos que aceptar la realidad geográfica de que Belice...nuestros amigos son de habla hispano - México, Guatemala, Honduras y sólo tenemos y el Caribe nos divide lejos, hasta millas náuticas, ¿no? Y culturalmente, socialmente, económicamente no podemos correr de la realidad que es el

español."

A said the Creoles were having to learn Spanish for this reason:

"Obligadamente tienen que aprender el español porque ya nos estamos acercando más ahora a la cultura española debido a Centroamérica, Latinoamérica."

Of the respondents, those who were Creole said that Creoles spoke Spanish and many of those who were primarily Spanish-speaking said they did not. The truth appears to be that Creoles born in Corozal do speak Spanish - some only Spanish-and Creole immigrants into Corozal speak it to varying degrees. L said that Black Hondurans and Guatemalans from Livingstone spoke Spanish unlike the Belize City Creoles, implying the latter ought to be able to as well. No one referred to the 'Black Spanish' mentioned in Brockmann's articles (3 & 4), but J said she was 'dark Spanish'. 'Spanish' seems to be another word for mixed which might be of relevance to Le Page's (11) finding that, of the Belizeans his team interviewed, more claimed Spanish descent than could have been possible according to census figures. J appears to be using 'Spanish' as a term for 'mixed' when she is describing one particular pupil:

"We have a family - they are Spanish, but they're Spanish - the mother is coolie. And it's a very gifted child, but dark Spanish like my colour and they talk only Creole."

Some of the language attitudes covered in this section have been almost theatrical because they are the expression of up and

coming middle-class mestizo ideology. They are undeniably vociferous participants in the situation of language conflict. Some would say that the mestizos have been well-treated by P.U.P. governments. Collins (12) writes:

'The mestizos of the north have had various gestures made to them so that they don't feel culturally dominated - they have virtually free movement over the Mexican border, they teach Spanish in schools and use it when English isn't understood and the politicians are usually representative in that they are Spanish speakers too.'

R recognises that the policy of the P.U.P. government in 1984 at least was to place bilinguals in government posts, despite his complaints of a Creole monopoly elsewhere:

"era difícil para mí conseguir este trabajo por medio de esta competición, ¿no ve? Pero aunque ahora se está realizando bastante el Ministerio con independencia de que en estas áreas, por ejemplo, Corozal, un oficial debe ser bilingüe."

The reality is that English is important because Belize is economically infinitely more dependent on English-speaking countries than its Spanish-speaking neighbours and it is undeniable that Creole, for all the stigma attached to it, is gaining ground.

### 5.3. Language attitudes towards Creole.

Grant (13) writes 'The Creole dialect in Belize does not suffer a

social stigma.'. This is not the case, school children find the way they write English does not satisfy the teachers:

B "They're writing books on it - the Creole. Imagine! Imagine! I mean it's hard for them. They got to write that English for that exam."

S said "it's like a slang of the English language". M says of Creole 'It's a dialect, not a language'. L does doubt its status as a language:

"It seems to be a simple language. I'm not sure we call it a language....I don't want to say it's not a language because I would be criticised for that you know, but it's not considered as English or Spanish - the grammar, the vocabulary".

LM said many people do not like to speak English, including herself, because "it's much longer". No doubt it smacks of pretension too. Asked why people speak Creole W answered:

"Because it's much easier - that's why they speak it. If a Creole person would come here and say 'How you wake up this morning man?' and 'Good' you know - I won't try to say 'Quite alright' or 'Fine' - 'Good man' - you know this 'man', you know."

P speaks of the fact she tends to use English rather than Creole in the following terms:

"I find that in talking Creole I tend to have a little more English....sometimes I use some words if my husband would say 'Do you think the boys understand what you are saying? I don't know

the meaning of that word. Listen to the big words you are using'. You know like he would point it out to me and I guess he wants to tell me 'Well, you, what language are you using, right?' However it comes naturally to me sometimes, you see, after I have studied".

J, a Creole speaker, obviously feels Creole in unrestrained outbursts is inappropriate in certain situations. She is not keen on Creoles from Belize City because they are overdressed - "Looking chic like they going places":

EW "What do people speak in all the government offices, the shops and the banks and everything in Corozal?

J Everybody speaks Creole and it's impolite to hear the telephone operators..I have been in the telephone office - it's my friend they telephone, and when she answers it, she comes out so raw. I don't think she needs to. You know I feel like, I feel you must use your discretion..and she comes out so broad you know."

She also said she did not think Creole was an appropriate language:

"I don't think the government will ever say Creole is the Belize language because the government will never accept Creole as a language for Belize. It's the policy of the government to speak English for Belize you know. I think who talk Spanish will talk Spanish and who talk English will talk English..

EW Why doesn't the government admit Creole is the language spoken in Belize?

J It's just that, I mean even, I don't think even the people would think it's natural to say internationally Belize is Creole. So it's just not proper to do a thing like that."

W had similar feelings:

"I wouldn't like Creole to be picked up as a formal language in our country. I don't know why - it's just my personal feeling. I feel like either we teach the children the correct English language you know and encourage them to speak it or Spanish - one of the two. But not the ..to me, I consider the Creole as an in between, as an in between language. It's a whole mixture you know. You know come to legalize Creole. Many Creole speak Creole in so many different ways I don't think you can ever legalize it. Sometimes I pick up a book and I try to read it in Creole - I can't because what interferes is my Spanish language, my English language. It becomes a whole mess into my mouth you know. To me like it's a second language, a second ready-made, man-made language. It's not something that was there like Spanish or English. It's true that some countries develop their own language and they call it French, they call it German, they call it so on. But we started as a colonial country and Britain you know...and we started as we taught English in schools. Why not continue with it and Creole? It's going to be something very new for me to teach it because I'm old already and I've come into this system of either speaking Spanish or English."

Some Spanish-speakers see Creole as nothing more than a lingua franca:

EW "So in Belize how many people speak Creole?

L In the country of Belize? I only want to say about 75% of the population.

EW Would that be the first language of all of them?

L No, no we don't consider the Creole..When we speak to our own Belizean people, our friends especially the ones who don't understand English or Spanish, they speak in Creole."

#### 5.4 Creolization.

Creole is often referred to as the lingua franca in material on Belize and this is no doubt the case except for those groups which are particularly isolated like the Mopan and Ket'chi Maya in the south of the country. These Maya Indians are reputed to speak English very well because they do not know Creole and they learn English at school. In the north however, the Maya villagers have claimed a Mestizo identity by learning Spanish.. It appears that Spanish is not so widespread in the south. In rural areas Ket'chi and Mopan Maya are spoken and in the towns and villages along the coast Creole is spoken. The Garífuna speak their language amongst themselves, but Spanish does not appear to have the foothold it has in the north. Contact with Spanish-speaking Mexicans is much more predominant in the north. Belizeans are constantly going over the border to Chetumal. In



1973-74 Santa Elena Customs Officials told Koenig (2) that 225 local people (Mexican and Belizean) cross the border daily to do their shopping, to visit the doctor or dentist, for entertainment and to visit friends and relatives. Quintana Roo in Mexico is much more densely populated and economically dynamic than the border areas of Guatemala and so in the west and south of Belize Spanish does not have the economic basis and the immediacy it does in the north.

However Creole is spreading in the north. It appears from Koenig (2) and Rubinstein (8, 14) that even in the last decade Corozal Town was unquestionably a community with a Spanish-speaking Mestizo identity and Brockmann (4) portrays Orange Walk as having much the same cultural affinities. In 1984 Creole was much more predominant than sources lead one to expect. B said Corozaleniens had lost their Spanish heritage since many did not know how to speak Spanish well and they spoke mostly English.

S said:

"A lot of Creole is being spoken now because a lot of the coloured people from Belize have settled in Corozal but years back you know very, very few are the Creoles living in Corozal."

L said Creole and Spanish were generally spoken in Corozal Town:

"I think they speak a lot of Creole...Creole and Spanish."

Comments that Creole was spoken in Corozal were common:

EW "And all your brothers and sisters speak Spanish?"

M Yes, I think all of them. Mostly the Creole we speak here in Corozal...Only when you are working in an office, or you teach, you try to speak the English. But mostly you get along fine you know. Just in Creole people understand you."

AW made a useful retrospective comparison:

AW "Estoy comprendiendo de que todo el mundo quiere hablar inglés o en criollo ahora y se está cambiando la cosa. Se está volviendo como estaba como yo lo dejé en Belice en 1955.

EW Entonces ¿los niños ya hablan criollo?

WA Están hablando más criollo que antes. Eso es una cosa que noté. Cuando yo vine a Corozal en 1955 no se hablaba ni una palabra de criollo aquí, ¿sabe? Aquí sólo se hablaba dos lenguas - el inglés, y el inglés gramático también hablaban los estudiantes, y el español, ¿right? Pero el inglés que hablaban estos niños era inglés gramático y no se hablaba criollo y por eso andan bastante bien a sus exámenes de inglés también, ¿no? Pero hoy día el criollo está entrando muy fuerte y me parece que todos niños, criollo quieren hablar. No es sorprendente oír mi niño hablar criollo aunque siempre hable bastante español, ¿no? Es sorprendente oír unas palabras en inglés o en criollo."

He attributes the increased use of Creole to increased contact with Belize City. Children go to sixth form in Belize City and there is generally a lot of commercial and social contact because Belize City is close. We must remember that until the 1930s all communication with Belize City was by river. A road made the

journey shorter but it was a badly surfaced winding road and finally in the 1970s a straight tarmaced road was constructed and Belize City is only 2 1/2 to 3 hours away by car or bus.

A and S also pointed out that Creoles have been settling in Corozal since the establishment of the sugar industry in the early 1960s. The new Tower Hill factory in Orange Walk has seen Creole and Carib migration to that town too and, as it is even closer to Belize City, it is more creolised culturally and linguistically.

EW "Y ahora en Orange Walk, ¿qué hablan?

A Es lamentable que ahora, debido a la influencia del beliceño moreno y la apertura de la carretera que se inauguró en 1936, ya se están olvidando ahorita de la lengua tanto española como maya y tiende a pensar y hablar más el criollo, que es criollo beliceño. Ni es inglés, ni es español, ni es..ahora sí es una mezcla, es un patois.

EW Yo pensé que hablan igual español allá que aquí.

A Pues posiblemente no de edad como de 40 años, 50 años - todavía les queda todavía su español. Pero la juventud es lamentable decir que sí ya el colonizaje inglés los afectó bastante que no saben qué cultura tienen.

EW Y, aquí, ¿que pasa igual con la juventud?

A No, al contrario. Pues no tanto aquí en Corozal, debido a que nosotros tenemos más relaciones cercanas para con Chetumal.

Aunque también siempre la influencia del criollismo existe en Corozal. Pero no tanto como en Orange Walk. Aquí la gente en Corozal tienden más a hablar más el español, es decir la gente de 30 años para arriba. La juventud por ejemplo no hablan español, ni habla inglés - son sólo criollismos".

R "Vamos hablar primero de cada distrito - Corozal ya diría que 90% hablan español, ¿no?

EW ¿Orange Walk?

R Orange Walk sería menos por que hay más influencia criolla geográficamente pues. Está más cerca de Belice y nosotros estamos cerca de Chetumal y nosotros hablamos más español que en Orange Walk y lo mismo se aplica al Cayo. Al Cayo creo que también disminuye, ¿no? el porcentaje por medio, de la misma razón, cerca de, tienen más conexión con Belice, ciudad de Belice y Ud. tal vez si va al Cayo u Orange Walk va notar de que bastante Mestizo habla criollo.

EW Ah sí, ¿y aquí no?

RR Y aquí casi no también pues la influencia de Mexico, Chetumal, ¿no?

W was of the same opinion about Orange Walk being less like Corozal than before:

EW "Orange Walk's different isn't it? Even from Corozal.

W Yes, Orange Walk you have people like us but very few - the

majority are being mixed now."

This 'mixed' background is a feature of Belizean communities. J, whom we have met already has a mixed background in that her mother was half Maya-mestizo and half East Indian and her father Creole. We have seen how she regards Belize City Creoles and it is noticeable she identifies with a rural village way of life. Nor does P, a mixed Corozalenian, like Belize City. She says she does not care for all the entertainment and the atmosphere and the congestion and the unhealthy air. She feels she has more freedom in Corozal.

L and W said that in the 1970s many people had not liked the term 'Belizean' for their nationality as they associated it with people from Belize City.

L "At the beginning we were a bit...ashamed of calling ourselves Belizeans for the reason is that, you know, we have the British passport and at first we would consider ourselves British. But we knew we were not British because we were just a colony of Great Britain. So when we went over to Chetumal and they call 'Where do you come from?' and I just said I'm from Corozal 'Who are you?', I mean 'What 's your..' - I'm a corozaleño. I wouldn't say I'm Belizean because in those days it was considered British Honduras. But one of those things that really we, especially in the North, didn't like was when they used to come here to Belize...when the Mexicans go back home they go with a bad impression of Belize because they used to steal from them and they used to mob them and when we went over there we would have,

if we said we were Belizeans then they were going to assume we behave just like the rest.

JB said she was 'mixed' and looking at the details of interviewees' families, there is no doubt they do have remarkably mixed racial backgrounds and their stated identity does appear to be a matter of choice. Those defending Spanish and the Mestizo culture did not necessarily come from Corozal, though they were Mestizos racially. Other Mestizos identified with the Belizean Creole way of life rather than a more Mexican one. Indeed as we have seen Mestizos are creolised in Belize City, the south-west of Belize and even Orange Walk.

R admitted there was some 'mixing' in Belize, but he affirmed Mestizos only marry amongst themselves:

"Se casa dentro de su propia raza si son mestizos mestizos, ¿no?"

Now this was the perception of a person who was very much against Anglo-Creole dominance in Belize. P, however, a mixed (Creole and East Indian) Creole saw the situation differently:

P "I find Corozal is not average you know - like the races are not cut up, isolated. There is more a gradual mixing."

A said "la gente yucateca, paisana, mestizo-maya" married Creoles because they had the best jobs. Linguistically the result of miscegenation will be the eradication of Creole according to A, despite the fact that elsewhere he recognises that Creole is spoken by mixed couples:

A "El criollo eventualmente se va a eradicar porque en el intercasamiento de las razas va a sobrevivir el español y el inglés -el inglés correcto. No quiero decir que unos de ellos no hablaran criollo. Sí. Pero el inglés correcto y el español van a predominar porque si un maya se casa con una de la raza africana, pues él absorbe español o absorbe inglés - uno de los dos va a absorber."

Although A was so keen to link Mestizo origins with the Maya civilization, he was not so happy that the Creoles should look back to their roots and be proud of Creole:

A "Pues los criollos, debido yo creo en un cierto punto a la ignorancia de sus raíces históricas, piensa más, cierta sección, como que si fueron de origen africana, porque el inglés se les impuso eso que el inglés - les hizo pensar de que no hay nada mejor de que acá una persona puede hablar criollo."

However the reality is that Creole is spoken in the towns and villages except where they are isolated and inhabited exclusively by one linguistic group.

J "Which language you mean to be the most useful to me? I would say Creole again. It's Creole. People will talk Creole. They talk English, but they will talk Creole."

S said her daughter would pick up Creole at school. A fourteen year old, CN, when asked why he and his friends talked in Creole, said 'es una manía'. AW describes how he felt about Creole when he was a child:



"Hay gentes en Belice que hablaban este criollo, como dicen, el criollo crudo y sonaba tan curioso a ellos hablar esta cosa que a mí me daba ganas hablar igual a ellos y a ellos empezaba a imitar así que era un chiste esto, ¿no? Era un relajo."

It must be said that young people are attracted by the way of life of their counterparts in the Caribbean and America. For this reason Creole enjoys a covert prestige among the young. As Geneviève Escure (5) found amongst the Garífuna young people 'taakin raas' and American Black English are popular as is American disco music. In Corozal and Belize City everyone loved reggae and Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie. Also in 1984 break-dancing and body-popping were the ultimate for trend-conscious young people. Everyone was trying their luck in local competitions and in Belize there was quite a show of it in the streets. Brockmann (4) also found:

'The young Creole scene in Belize is more exciting than the Mestizo subculture, which appeals to a number of young Mestizo males'.

Covert prestige is a powerful force affecting language choice. In England some people will prefer to maintain a local accent rather than adopt an educated one although they have every chance of doing so. Who knows why they do this - are they signaling great affection for their roots or a refusal to completely adopt all middle-class values and behaviour, or could it simply be more macho for men or down to earth for women? Many people have a

distinct image of themselves. In Belize as Creole is a lingua franca, and , for the young people at least, a street-life language, the option of speaking it gives language choice and consequent 'acts of identity' as Le Page (6) would say, a certain fluidity. For Ellen Bouchard Ryan (15):

'Just as ethnicity should be viewed as a matter of choice, not accident (16), accent or dialect adoption should be considered as a matter due largely to conscious choice. Thus, although regional, ethnic, and lower-class individuals have limited access to opportunities for acquiring the prestige variety compared to members of high status groups much of the failure of these individuals to profit from whatever opportunities are available is due to the counteracting pressures favouring their native speech styles.'

It must be emphasised that people's choices are limited by social factors, but the young Creole culture forms a subculture which could open young peoples' options in the future.

As we have said Le Page foresees the possibility of the development of a Hispanised Creole-speaking Belizean identity. As he points out the Belizeans outside of Belize City who are moving in this direction have not yet chosen to throw in their lot with the Belizeans of Belize City. In Belize City some Creoles are proud of Creole and of their black identity which extends to their sisters in the Caribbean, the States and Africa. This is one aspect of nationalistic sentiment in Belize City that

the people from the rural areas would not identify with and most do not aspire to their urban way of life. W liked Belize City. Everybody else complained of the stench (the sewers are open), the crime and the street bravado. People expressed their wish to live in a peaceful place where they could keep animals and grow food. Le Page (6) says:

"In the case of Belize it seems that the coastal creoles have made their act of identity...But the people of the interior are subject to rather different pressures from those on the coast; they still reveal themselves as being more or less Spanish; more or less Creole, more or less educated and so on; they still move considerable distances within a multidimensional sociolinguistic space in order to accommodate to different encounters and different topics of conversation'.

It may not be a question of time, after which the two identities will merge. Perhaps a 'mixed' identity will remain divergent from the Creole one. Racially the Creole identity is associated with the more black Afro-Caribbean identity of Belize City, whereas 'mixed' people are descended from unions between Creoles, Mestizos, Mayans and East Indians.

W "My daughter is staying with a Creole family....they're not really Creole people, you know. They're kinda mixed...the husband is from Placencia and these people from Placencia I think they are descendents from the white Caribs mixed with English people - so they are brown skin with blue eyes and clear hair..and the girl is an East Indian..they have children which

look like East Indians - they're a little bit darker then you know. But they have straight straight hair."

This racial 'mixed' identity according to Le Page (6) is resolving the linguistic differences of the various parties firstly in a 'macaronic' use of language involving constant code-switching and finally in a Hispanised Creole. The culture is rural. It is the product of increased contact and incipient economic development with the opening of roads and development of transport. It has been <sup>a</sup> development which has occurred outside any institutional framework. Le Page (6) suggests it could form the basis of new Belizean identity - with the right economic support.

'In San Ignacio and the main road villages ethnic mixing is being accompanied by the erosion of both 'Spanish' and 'English' in favour of an emergent Creolised and Hispanised English. It is perhaps here that the new 'Belizean' is most likely to emerge. The recent transfer of the capital from the port of Belize to the new city of Belmopan, on the borders of Cayo and Belize Districts, may well reinforce the prospect. If the country can somehow offer reasonable employment prospects within its own borders, status as a 'mixed' 'Belizean' in a predominantly agricultural country, offering advancement to good cultivators through an education geared to their needs, may have strong attractions. If however there continues to be little employment in the country itself, then external norms may continue to polarize the society, academic education in either English or Spanish is likely to be throughout desirable , and the

development of indigenous standards may be retarded.'

At the moment Belizean peasant farmers have little chance of prospering when the government is geared only to agricultural production for export. Land redistribution and agrarian reform is required. The small farmer has to be provided with the facilities to sell his produce at home. Market places offer a pitiful selection of vegetables and fruit compared to Mexican markets. There is potential in a home market although small and its development would be integrative economically and socially.

It is relevant to record here that AW saw the increased miscegenation in Corozal as the penetration of the Indian villagers who had prospered from cane production right into the higher reaches of class-conscious Corozal Town.

It must be noted that Creole is not gaining ground simply because it is a lingua franca and there is obviously an affection for Creole at the very least. It is spoken by many people as their first language and is not merely a second language. It is a language of solidarity as we have seen, as opposed to English which is used to stake a claim to a higher status.

Belizeans are aware of language's potential use as a device to signal divergence or convergence amongst people. J appreciates bilinguals because they can accommodate to people.

J "Take for instance the Prime Minister and the Minister of Natural Resources - I've been at his office on a few occasions and when these behind, come from behind there, he automatically

goes out and greets them in Maya and it makes them so welcome you see. So it's been an asset, well to talk to persons at their own level you know. Somewhere in an English book I saw where it says that there is , everywhere there's different levels of speaking to a person. Say, for instance, I couldn't talk to you the way I talk to my neighbour - you have to use their type of words."

B pointed out that Belizeans will try to speak English 'correctly' to a foreigner. Both Koenig (2) and Brockmann (3) observe how Belizeans are forced to make a very pragmatic use of language.

L "If I feel I'm speaking to a person that understands very little Spanish, I speak in English and vice versa with the other language."

Koenig (2) emphasises the fact that no language has managed to impose itself because the respective ethnic group is unable to do so - since no group has the upper-hand socioeconomically in Belize, then no language has acquired more status and prestige. Whilst neither the Creoles nor the Mestizos manage to assert themselves in power and authority the potential conflict is neutralised in social interaction by a pragmatic choice of language. Brockmann (3) outlines the process in detail:

'Outside of the circumstances in which English is appropriate, the accommodating manner in which to behave to members of other ethnic categories is to speak to a person in the vernacular appropriate to his or her perceived ethnicity, unless another

linguistic code is known to be preferred. Perceived ethnicity is judged by race. A person replies in the language or dialect in which she is addressed. Among friends various patterns develop, depending largely upon competence in the respective linguistic codes. If someone does not know all of the relevant languages or dialects, the linguistic code common to all is used or a translation provided. In the former case, failure to use one's ethnic vernacular is not a violation of ethnic loyalty. However, in such circumstances, communication addressed to a fellow category member, rather than to the whole group, is commonly in one's own vernacular. The content of statements made in the vernacular do not generally suggest any reason for hiding the communication from the larger group. For example, a Mestizo participating in a multiethnic group conversation in English would exchange comments on a current local event with a Mestizo friend next to him in Spanish. Except for circumstances in which English is used or someone does not know the appropriate vernacular, failure to use one's vernacular with fellow category members is ethnically disloyal and pretentious. Such behaviour brings adverse comment. Use of a person's vernacular suggests a closeness that use of another language does not. For this reason, the common practice of Mestizos speaking English to Creoles has a different quality than the use of Spanish by Creoles to Mestizos.'

P made the following comment when we were discussing the problems of not mastering another language well:

P "As long as we are satisfied that the listener understands



O.K.? For instance you know I go to several stores here to buy, like as soon as I walk in at any time of the day and I find if the owner is Mestizo he would be talking in Spanish O.K.? But I would continue to in English you see? And we understand each other and that I feel is the standard code."

Since either partner could understand the other's language, this could be the reaction of two people who know each other's identity and don't expect the other to speak anything but her usual language or are not offended if they do so. It could equally be the result of an unwillingness to put oneself out for the other group member.

Creole is not a lingua franca used by everyone in multilingual encounters and those people who choose to use Creole may do so because it is a language of solidarity. W explaining why people use Creole said:

W "It 's much easier for me because either we can talk and we can chat back and although that person is speaking and what I'm speaking is completely different, but yet still we can communicate, you know. But to put it in writing and to learn it is something else. I would really say it's good for communication but not for writing and I don't know how we could".

In the next chapter we shall take a look at the external pressures on Belize's language composition as well as the internal ones which we have been covering so far.

## 5.5. Some points about language attitudes.

5.5.1. It must be said that people's perception of the state of competition between the different languages in Corozal and Belize varied according to their own particular language preferences. L felt Spanish 'is on the rise' as did R and A. However others pointed to the increasing importance of Creole in everyday communication and P insisted English was the language making most headway. The subjectivity of language attitudes mean they can never be taken as a trustworthy factual report of the state of play in situations of linguistic conflict. See 5.5.3.

5.5.2. The varying nature of perceptions made by subjects of one particular language community is highlighted by the contradictions that arise. M and CN both said on the one hand that Creole was the main language for communication in Corozal and at another point that Spanish is. It must be said that the interviews failed to pinpoint whether they were perhaps referring to different domains of interaction. The fact that Spanish is used at home and in everyday interactions is a distinctive feature of Corozal as compared to Belize City. The fact that Creole or rather 'broken English' is another important language of everyday home or street communication is also true. Contradictions should not necessarily be attributed to badly designed eliciting procedures or 'uncooperative' respondents - far from it. The status of languages and their speakers is not definitive in Belize - there is social mobility and fluidity regarding the location of sociocultural groups in the social

structure. I do not agree with Koenig (2) and Brockmann (3 & 4) in their strict allocation of function and status to the languages involved. English does have the greater prestige and is used in the most formal and prestigious situations, but Spanish is not proscribed from use in banks for example. It is counterproductive when an interviewer does not allow for the possibility of instability or transitory phases in the allocation of status to languages and categorical answers should not be expected or forced.

5.5.3. Self -reports are notoriously unreliable and R and A's claims to speaking Maya should be regarded rather as an indication of their interest in promoting pride in the Mayan history, culture and language because of their political persuasion. In the same vein Spanish-speakers overestimated their numbers (R, L & S).

#### 5.5. Linguistic trends confirmed by the 1980 census.

In an article written in 1985 (17), I looked for indications of language shift in the figures related to language in the 1980 census. This was done on the understanding that the census figures may well be unreliable but I feel it was a worthwhile exercise if no claims are made for the statistics and their interpretation being unquestionable. I am happy to read in the Belize Country Profile (18) that:

'field checks indicate that the census is extremely accurate by Latin American standards'.

'In those areas of movement between central towns and Belize City (where over half the population lives (18)), Creole is apparently taking off as a first language rather than just a lingua franca, breaking down the more conservative pattern of each ethnic group maintaining its own language.

It is worth remarking that as well as Belize City where 75.1% are Creole by race and 89.4% speak 'English', in Cayo District where 49% of the people are classified as Mestizo, 47.6% speak Creole as opposed to 40.2% who speak Spanish.

The situation in Cayo District is slightly irregular because the capital, Belmopan, is situated there with 56.8% of its population Creole and 81.5% English speaking. In Stann Creek District, away from the Garífuna personality of Dangringa, 43% of the population is Creole and 58.3% speak 'English' and only 33.4% speak Spanish. Of equal importance is Orange Walk Town where despite a Creole population of only 19.7% of the total, 31.2% of the town's population speak English (see Table 2).

San Ignacio and Orange Walk Towns are intermediate points between the Creole ex-capital and the Mestizo extremes of Corozal Town on the Mexican border and communities like Benque Viejo on the Guatemalan border. They also seem to have developed into linguistic intermediates as Creole is obviously the language of a significant proportion of people who are not racially Creole.'

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## Chapter 6

### **An evaluation of the language situation and the need for a language policy.**

#### 6.0. Power of the languages in competition in Belize.

##### 6.0.1. English

At present English is unlikely to drop from its dominant position in Belize's education system, even if it were to cease to be the sole language of instruction because of future language policy decisions. As we have seen Belize's relations with ex-colonial and neo-colonial countries and associated countries are of vital economic importance. Belize is in C.A.R.I.C.O.M. and depends on preferential sugar prices and aid from the U.K. and the E.E.C., the Commonwealth and the United States. Belize's constitution, education system and trade are all determined by its former colonial status. Belize does not have greater political and economic interaction with Central America because the Guatemalan claim prevented its development until the mid-1970s and because of the chronic sociopolitical unrest in those countries. Since the 1950s the P.U.P. has very much wished to associate Belize with Central America because it rejected the connotations of dependency in its relations with the ex-colonial power and former colonies and U.S. interest and presence in Belize:

EW "Pero también tradicionalmente ha tenido relaciones con el Caribe, ¿no?

R Por medio del colonialismo.

EW ¿Y el Caribe sigue teniendo mucho interés en Belice o ya lo pierden?

R Económicamente nosotros no tenemos nada que conseguir del Caribe...nos impusieron esta relación y queremos salir de ella ahorita. Por ejemplo en el campo educacional siempre tomábamos los G.C.E.s y ahora los C.X.C...Ahora a poco tuvimos una junta y estamos molestos. ¿Qué nosotros ganamos de la contribución que hacemos a the University of the West Indies?. Bastante personas universitarias, ¿no? o conferencistas que venían del Caribe y cuando ellos vienen aquí, ellos tratan de imponer valores caribeños y está en conflicto con nuestros valores aquí que son totalmente diferentes, y el lenguaje particularmente. Hemos tenido que aceptar libros de textos del caribe -aprende. ¡Mire! ¡Mire! ¡Qué mas absurdo! ¡Aprende del cricket! ¿Aquí cuando se usa el cricket? Aquí es el fútbol, ¿no? Bueno, cosas así. Y que realmente culturalmente tiene razón el pueblo aquí en Corozal. Ha habido problemas. Los padres se han puesto bastante hostiles a comprar los libros de texto."

Although the ideology blatantly contradicts the reality, the Mestizos resent the Creoles' identification with the Caribbean and the United States and even Europe.

A "Yo digo se habla más español en Corozal y más en el Oeste

que es el Benque y el Cayo. En Belice, la ciudad, ya ese complejo que se han tejido para el afro digamos de Belice, africano, debido a las músicas tropicales de Jamaica, de Barbados y todo eso. Pues, han influido bastante. Además la influencia norteamericana también. Todo tiene que ver con la lengua inglesa.

EW ¿Cómo se ve esta falta de identidad nacional?

R Yo creo que es político. Es político en el que particularmente el criollo, ¿verdad? se cree bastante asociado con vínculos fuertes con todo lo que representaba la Gran Bretaña, la Mancomunidad y todo eso, ¿no? Y no podemos también negar el hecho de que por medio de la Gran Bretaña los criollos pudieron tomar poder, ¿verdad? Es que se sienten ¿cómo? ¿Cómo podemos decir? Se sienten - no quiero usar esta palabra - se sienten obligados a la Gran Bretaña...ese servicio civil no es a favor del gobierno presente...parece ser ahora que tiene eso de que ellos son británicos o americanos y el otro partido no es - es mestizo - hablando de las mayas, hablando de identidad maya."

These split loyalties are even more sharply focused against the backdrop of mainly Creole emigration and the arrivals of Maya and Mestizo refugees.

As we have seen some Belizeans felt that the emigrants were selfishly taking the easy way out by leaving Belize and its undeveloped economy and that they should feel sufficiently for Belize in order to stay and work towards the solution of its economic problems especially since they were trained in Belize.

At least one Belizean I met had made this choice consciously and not as a secondary factor to other incentives to stay in Belize like family relationships and preference for the climate and way of life. Le Page (1) recounts the following:

'In one Belizean case, a young man found to have very consciously resisted Creolization of his English whilst a pupil at St John's College in Belize, and to have accepted the degree of ostracism which this brought, had strong political motivation which was most revealing when we discussed it with him....light has been thrown on 'split motivation' in behaviour; in Belize, in the tensions between how to behave if you want eventually to get a job outside the country and how to behave as a good Belizean.'

If emigration is to continue to be crucial for the alleviation of unemployment and poverty in Belize, English will continue to be highly valued and any attempt to reduce its function as <sup>the</sup> language of instruction may be intransigently resisted.

#### 6.0.2. Spanish

Two respondents in Corozal said that Spanish was to be the language of the future in Belize as the Creoles were emigrating in large numbers and Central American refugees were settling:

L "A lot of immigrants from our neighbouring countries - it seems that they have problems with their country - war, conflicts. It's understood they are migrating for peace - for a peaceful country like Belize which - their culture seems to change a bit when they come here but then their language is

mostly Spanish. They speak Spanish. A lot of Creoles - the majority of Belizeans who have migrated to the United States are a lot of Creoles. So more Creoles are going away and more Spanish are coming to Belize".

However the refugees who have gone to Belize are not necessarily going to settle there. Of the Salvadoreans I spoke to in San Joaquin village, Corozal District, some wanted to go to the United States and most wanted to go home when they could. If they do stay because they like Belize they might be motivated to become Belizean and therefore Creolized.

As we have already mentioned Belize has seen considerable numbers of refugees pass through on other occasions. After the Caste Wars in the middle of the nineteenth century there were more Mayan Indians and Mestizos and descendents of Spanish colonialists in Belize than the rest of the Creole and Garífuna population put together. However well before the end of the nineteenth century the Creoles regained their demographic predominance because most refugees moved on.

What is even more worthy of note is that Belize provided a haven then for much the same reasons it does today. White (2) quotes from a letter written by Superintendent Frederick X Seymour to Darling on July 16, 1857 (Foreign Office 3913):

'Surrounded by Republics in a state of dissolution where all the evils of tyranny and anarchy subsist simultaneously, British Honduras has in the last few years appeared as if it was an experiment to see what can be made of the Spanish Americans, who,

though not useless individually, seem to have proved their inability to manage successfully their own public affairs. In our territory some several thousands of persons - in Corozal alone three thousand - have found a home where, under a tolerably strong and abundantly liberal government, they come and go and do as they please. At first political refugees were the principal immigrants but when it was found that those who crossed the frontier, hoping for better times, and a more favourably disposed Government, did not return when their wishes were fulfilled and the party opposed to them overthrown; the attractions of Corozal, San Esteban, Puerto Consejo and other villages became known in Yucatán and persons of no particular political bias began to emigrate to a country where there are no military conscriptions, arbitrary taxes, revolutions or shootings; but where on the contrary, they can enjoy personal freedom and the full benefits of the fruits of their industry."

#### 6.1. A multilingual plural society.

The Creoles and the Garífuna do fear the Latin side of Belize's cultural make-up because they do associate it with the political instability and violence of Central America. However this might not always be the case and Belize would do well to keep its Spanish speakers and promote an understanding of, if not participation in, a more Hispanic culture, as it should not deny itself access to any future Central American economic development. The Mestizos in Belize are an up and coming business community and Belize's immediate neighbours are Central

American countries. So geographic and demographic factors do support a certain solution in bilingualism. Such a solution would not involve a reconciliation whereby everybody learnt English and Spanish at school as L.W.C.s - that would perhaps be the pluralist ideal. However there could be a suspension of the will to eradicate the 'other' language and culture, which we have seen exists at the moment. R said Belize could never afford bilingual education. However people like J and M did express their enthusiasm for a plural society in Belize. M said it is more colourful with the different groups contributing their culture and foods. As in most countries people take bilingualism for granted - it is part of being Belizean:

M "To me it's part of our culture being bilingual. The Creole they might not speak the Spanish but they understand it you know".

There were the following comments too:

EW "And how many people speak 2, 3 or 4 languages?

S Well mostly everybody's supposed to speak at least two."

EW "So you wouldn't say that Belize'll end up being a Spanish-speaking country?

L No, I wouldn't. It will remain an English and Spanish speaking country. It's our culture and we are happy with it and we're proud of it."

L had given an example of this pride earlier on:



"I had a beautiful experience when at a - I think it was the United Nations, I can't remember, international forum, meeting, there was President Reagan as the President, or Carter or one of them. Either one of the American Presidents, I might say, was addressing the gathering but he could not address in Spanish..(?)... add to that an interpreter. At the same time another president from Mexico was going to address the same gathering but he could not address in English so he had an interpreter for Spanish and we went by 4 or 5 or 6 presidents from other countries. They couldn't speak either - couldn't speak any English or Spanish. But when our leader from our country of Belize went up that same platform and he expressed himself in both languages fluently without an interpreter, which is a very good thing, I was happy that, to know that people in other countries have seen that Belize, even though it is considered an English-speaking country, but it's as good as any other speaking country when it comes to (?). We have had various instances when foreigners came to our country and we have to get interpreters. But in our case if, say, our Ministers go to Mexico, we have no problem. We don't need an interpreter for him in any other Spanish countries or any other English countries".

However some Corozaleniens feel Belizeans do not have pride in their country. M said some, including teachers, refused to stand up respectfully for the anthem. W said a national pride would have to be fostered in school. As we saw the term 'Belizean' was often a secondary classification of someone's identity. The most immediate identity given for themselves by respondents was

'Belizean' - the rest caused themselves 'Creole' (2 people), 'Mestizo', 'Corozalenian', 'English', 'descendent of the Maya Indians', 'Hindu' and 'Mixed'. However there is a consensus that 'Belizean' is being used by more people.

People are proud of Belize being a peaceful democracy. The peaceful alternation of power which was effected in 1984-5 is a real achievement for a country in Central America. Guatemala is not liked for its regime and the 'serious'(W) atmosphere it creates amongst the population:

R "Guatemala es un país de inigualdades ...yo creo que los guatemaltecos son muy buenas personas, pero es la poliza o la política del gobierno, ¿verdad?....tiene millones de indios mayas indígenas en la pobreza la más extrema..yo creo que los de Guatemala tienen bastante para hacer dentro de su propio país antes de estar clamando por Belice."

Most Corozaleniens point, like L, to the peace and tranquillity of Belize, especially Corozal. L and S do not like going to Mexico, for example, because of the police always fining you for minor and petty or fictional infractions of the traffic regulations - 'mordidas'. Belizeans feel the atmosphere in Mexico can be aggressive because of this.

## 6.2. Language policy.

Allsopp (3) in an article written in 1965 proposed Creole as the instrument of national unity in Belize because it is already a lingua franca and because it clearly distinguishes Belizean

identity within Central America. Ashcraft and Jones (4) responded by pointing out that the linguistic situation in Belize is a complicated diaspora and that Creole would not be acceptable to Spanish-speakers in the north for example. 20 years later Le Page has shown us that Creole does actually have a foothold in Belize as an increasingly popular language. Would Belizeans even consider Creole as an official or national language? At the moment there would be much opposition as we have seen, even from Creole-speakers. If vernacular teaching were introduced for Spanish and Garífuna and Maya speakers even just in their early schooling years, perhaps Creole 'vernacular' primary education would be a half-way house response to the fact many Belizeans speak Creole and a considerable number only Creole. English, if not Spanish, do seem to be languages in which Belize must train some of its population at least, because of its political and economic environment. As we saw in chapter 4 these languages could be taught effectively by contrast and comparison with languages which the children have learnt as their mother-tongue and can handle confidently. This would require the development of language teaching materials which take into account the student's main language, be it Creole, Garífuna or Maya. This would involve a vast amount of work selecting orthographies, standardizing the language and developing it for modern day contexts. Perhaps the Caribbean could provide examples of English teaching manuals for Creole-speakers and Mexico and other Central American countries certainly have materials for teaching Spanish to Maya Indians which could be consulted. For vernacular

education much research would have to be carried out on them to produce textbooks in them. Sadly this is beyond the material and human resources of Belize. But Belizeans could be trained by experienced outsiders to produce materials in their vernacular languages.

The 'cost' of implementing education in six different languages and systematically teaching English and Spanish in Belizean schools might perhaps be beyond the capacity of the Belizean government's coffers, even if skilled manpower were available. It appears idealistic to even consider the possibility of such a reorganisation in education. However is its cost out of reach? What is the point of investing in an education system which currently ignores the linguistic resources of its children, inefficiently and ineffectively trying to develop others. Great capital investment at the outset of a new language policy designed to convert the children's language barriers into linguistic resources for the individual and the country would soon be earning dividends. If this is not financially feasible, then a long-term programme can be drawn up, reducing costs and improving effect by developing materials with teachers locally. Official recognition and encouragement of Belizean linguistic behaviour, combined with economic, especially rural, development, might give Belizeans a reason for preferring to stay in Belize rather than covet not only the material quality of life in the States but also its culture. If there is no economic development in Belize people will continue to believe they can only improve their lot by emigrating and so perpetuate an image of success

which is never associated with Belize, but with the U.S. Linguistically this identification with another culture erodes the value attributed to the home language which could lead to it being abandoned. Conversely a new lease of life with a socio-economic move upwards would make the linguistic community feel it could use its own language as some status would be connected to it.

A cost-benefit analysis of language planning has to take into account sociopsychological responses like this which are influential economically and politically.

Of course if no economic development occurs in Belize people will continue to emigrate and those left behind will be in competition with each other for the pickings. This will bring no solution to the fragmentation which exists and will make it difficult to effect a language policy which suits everybody. For example vernacular language education might be rejected because parents are anxious that time should be dedicated to learning L.W.C.s. This would only increase the unrest and instability which can be silenced in some quarters by neglecting their needs for the benefit of the stronger groups which at the moment are the Creoles and the Mestizos.

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## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

Originally the analysis of language needs in Belize was going to be through an extensive survey of language attitudes. The principle motivating the choice of language attitudes as the appropriate material on which to base a language policy was a democratic one of seeing what the possible recipients had to say. Abdelâli Bentahila (1) expresses why he finds language attitudes so valuable:

'The importance of an awareness of the attitudes underlying a bilingual situation cannot, I think, be overestimated. It is only by studying these attitudes that one can hope to reach a full understanding of bilingual individuals within it, and thereby assess their needs and difficulties. Such an understanding is essential if we wish to predict the probable future evolution of the language situation, in order to prepare for the future requirements of the community.'

Whilst I agree with the second sentence of this quote, I feel the determinants of language maintenance and shift are socioeconomic. Language attitudes are responses to the socioeconomic structure and as such are symptomatic of it. In Mexico Muñoz(2) found that marginalised Otomí communities saw no future in the economic viability of the same and so not in their language either. There



was indeed a verbalised resistance to the replacement of Otomí by Spanish but in fact it was accepted that Otomí was not appropriate outside of domestic and local domains and actual linguistic behaviour confirmed the language shift to Spanish. Muñoz (2) calls this acceptance of the vernacular language as the subordinate language 'dominant ideology absorption'. Thus powerless linguistic communities become assimilated. However linguistic communities with an autonomous economic base impose their will on others. Take for example Euskadi and Catalonia in Spain.

Attitudes are susceptible to change with an alteration in socioeconomic conditions. The economic frustrations of middle-class Blacks and the Chicanos in the U.S. resulted in them contrasting and asserting language and culture in relation to the Anglo-Saxon one. Both Fishman(3) and Bentahila(1) claim that language attitudes can be changed, but people are not likely to change their behaviour, for example in discarding a minority language, unless they can see a reason for doing so. In Belize languages are highly contrasted and attributed to different sociocultural groups. It is unrealistic to expect a Creole to learn Carib, nor a Carib Spanish, unless it were to serve a purpose for her. Belize is not isolated from the prestige attributed to cosmopolitan values and so it is hardly surprising English is so prized. Kelman(4) states that people will develop a sentimental attachment to a language which serves them well. Perhaps this is the phenomenon which explains the increased use of 'Broken English' in Belize.

As we have seen the language for an interaction is chosen in a pragmatic fashion. The individual puts communication with someone else before the assertion of his sociocultural identity. Williamson and Van Eerde(5) find that this is the case in multilingual societies:

'Intermarriage, occupational roles, institutional involvements and residential locale predisposed most respondents to be willing, if sometimes grudgingly, to function in either language, irrespective of their personal preference.'

This is an enforced solution where an individual's language differs from that of the majority, but the reconciliation of language differences between groups of people is not so easily achieved. Even where the practical language needs of Belizeans were to be met by the education system in the manner suggested herein, this institutional support has to be backed up by action on the socioeconomic front too. The belief that a multilingual language policy will suffice is mistaken:

'I do not consider multilingual societies as potentially dangerous as many people do, if there is adequate means for those with minority languages to move up the social, professional and administrative ladders. If not it can be explosive. It seems that there has to be a social cleavage as well as a linguistic one to cause troubles. Thus, if I feel that such a policy is not as dangerous as it might appear, and it is in many ways just formalizing the present linguistic situation while the system

gradually evolves on its own'(6)

The multilingual policy will protect no group which is threatened by a socioeconomic structure unfavourable to it. This is precisely why bilingual education policies in the United States and indeed in Great Britain are mooted as the sugar coating to a bitter pill, whereby the authorities are actually buying the minority groups out and bilingual education is false compensation. Kjolseth and Peñalosa (7 & 8) see it as a bribe whereby a government apparently gives a group what it wants but is in fact marginalising it. A proper study of the sociocultural context in which a language group finds itself improves our understanding of its state of health. Thus we can construct the whole story of a community's ideology and behaviour with regard to languages and/or language varieties. Sociolinguists must stop seeing the individual as the only component of society in language attitude surveys (9). Macro-components like emigration and rural development should be investigated too to throw light on the factors effecting the prosperity or decline of a language community and the possible significance of this linguistically.

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Appendix 1.

General Questionnaire\*

Name

Age

Address

How long have you lived in Corozal?

Where were you born?

I call myself English - what do you call yourself?

Nationality

Passport

What languages do you speak?

Which did you learn first?

What did your parents and grandparents and brothers and sisters speak when they spoke to you?

Where did your parents and grandparents come from? Where have they lived - in what different places?

Do you know anything about your family before that?

What languages were spoken in the village where you were born?

Which languages have you learnt since then? Why? Where?

Which language do you speak best?

Which language do you use most?

What language do you talk in with friends and neighbours?

Which language is most useful?

Which language helps you get work and to succeed?

Which languages are spoken in Corozal/in Belize?

Why so many?

And how did this situation come about?

What names are there for people who speak these different languages?

When do all the languages get used?

How many people speak the different languages in Corozal/in Belize?

How many people speak 2, 3 or 4 languages?

Who are these people?

Do they speak all these languages well?

Is it a good idea to learn so many languages?

Which language is it most important to learn? Why?

Is it important to learn Creole too? Is more Creole spoken these

days?

Are you married? Which language does your husband/wife speak? What do you speak when you are together? Do people who speak different languages often get married? Who would they usually be?

Do you have children? How many? What age are they? What do they do? Which language do you speak to them? Is this the first language they learnt? What other languages did they learn/have they learnt/are they going to learn? Why?

Where have you lived before? For how many years?

Why did you move house?

Where have you been on a visit? When? How long were you there?

Do you often go to Belize, Chetumal, Belmopan or anywhere else? Why? To see friends or on business? What languages do you speak there?

Have you ever been to the States? Where? What was it like? Which languages do they speak there? At work? What did you speak at home?

Do you know people who live there? Do you have friends or relations in other countries?

Do you see a lot of people in Corozal who don't come from here? Where are they from? What are they doing? What languages do they speak?



What are people who don't come from Corozal like? Foreigners?  
Are people from Belize City or Orange Walk different?

Did you go to school? Where? How many years/Which standard did  
you reach? Do you have any qualifications?

Which languages did they speak in school? What did the teachers  
speak? And the children? Was it difficult to understand what  
they were saying?

Which languages do you have to learn to read and write? Do they  
teach any other languages? Was this in many classes?

Did all the children get on well?

Could education be better in Belize? How? Would it be good to  
make it bilingual?

What do you do now? Do you have work? What? What language do  
you speak at work? At home? Do you like your work or would you  
like to do something else? How would that be possible? Would  
you like to live in another place? Is it best to live in the  
countryside or in the town?

Do you go to Church? Which? Which language is spoken in Church?  
That's the language the priest speaks? What do they speak in  
government offices, in the library, in shops, in the bank, in  
bars or restaurants, when you go to hospital to see a doctor?

Have you ever been a member of the Cadets or a sports team -  
which language was spoken?

Are you going to vote in the next elections? What would you do if you were elected?

Which language do you read in? What sort of things do you like to read? Which language do you write in?

Do you watch much television? Which languages do they speak on television?

What do you listen to on the radio? English, Spanish or Maya programmes?

What are the people like who speak Spanish/Creole/English/Maya/Carib? Do you get on well with all of them? Do they all speak English well? Where do all these different people live? What work do they do?

Which language do you like most? Would you like to speak this language all the time and not have to learn other languages? Do people sometimes stop speaking languages they do not like or do they never learn them? Will you ever change the language you speak mostly? Is English as important as Spanish? Which languages will be spoken most in Belize in future?

What is going to happen to Belize now it is independent? Is it already different from what it was in the past? How has it changed? Which languages used to be the most important? How is this going to change?

Which countries are the most important for Belize - Great

Britain/the United States/Central America/Mexico/the Caribbean?

Do you know people from these countries? What are they like?

Is there a lack of national pride in Belize?

When you meet a person for the first time are you affected by the colour of his skin or the language he/she speaks?

\*People were asked the questions in whichever language they pleased - Spanish or English. This questionnaire was only used as an aide-memoire for me to guide the conversation with interviewees. Usually we covered all the information, which the questions were intended to elicit, more or less spontaneously. Obviously the questionnaire was adapted according to the interviewee's personal history as we went along. People were wonderfully cooperative as our conversations lasted some 2 - 3 hours and were recorded. I also took down impressions of the interviewee's socioeconomic situation, of their personality and of any particular linguistic features.

#### **Additional questions for teachers.**

What language do you teach in? Do the pupils always understand? Do you sometimes have to teach in their language? What difficulties are there of comprehension and communication? So which languages do you speak in class (Creole, Spanish, Maya). Which do they learn to write?

What languages do the children speak together in class and in recreation?

Is English taught as a Second Language?

Are other languages taught?

What languages do teachers talk amongst themselves and to the Head?

Which children do best at school and which have the most problems? Which language do they tend to speak? Which sort of child has the best opportunities? Which sort of student has poor attendance at school?

How do children react if they don't speak English or Creole and find themselves in a different language environment? What do you do to help? Are they motivated to learn the new languages or not? Why?

What changes are needed in schools to improve education? What policy changes are planned for the future? Do you think bilingual education would be a good idea?

## Appendix 2

Some examples of English exercises from the summer school for selection to Corozal Community College (secondary school).

### Extract 1:-

After the proper number tell what kind of sentence each of the following is: simple, compound, complex, compound-complex.

1. A telegram or a telephone call at three in the morning always sends Mother into mild hysteria.
15. The search for uranium in northern Ontario was a pleasure to the engineers, who took along their fishing rods as well as their Geiger counters.

### Extract 2:-

15. I left home at a 1/4 to seven.
16. The girl said that she done it herself.
17. He returned home as quick as he could.
18. I have forgot to post the letter.
19. Where is my Boots?
20. She hurted her leg.
21. She got a bad accident.

22. There is four books on the table.
23. He went for to get up.
24. The lady bought a comb for the baby with celluloid.
25. Between you and I he is quite wrong.

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